THE LIFE OF LORD ROBERTS, V.C.

SIR GEORGE FORREST

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FIELD MARSHAL THE RIGHT HON. EARL ROBERTS,
G.C.S.I., V.C., O.M.

From the Painting by J. S. Sargent, R.A.

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THE LIFE OF LORD ROBERTS, K.G., V.C.

BY

SIR GEORGE FORREST, C.I.E.

WITH EIGHT PHOTOGRAVURES

Second Edition

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PREFACE

In 1901 a sketch of Lord Roberts's career was published in a work written by me, entitled "Sepoy Generals," which has for some time been out of print. My first intention was to reprint the original sketch, with two additional chapters, bringing the life record down to the present time. But when I had written these chapters and began to revise the original sketch, I found I was committed to writing what is practically a complete and new biography of Lord Roberts. The main object of the work is to enable the reader to form his own judgment of this great soldier by a clear presentation of his services in three main events in the annals of England: the Indian Mutiny, the Second Afghan War, and the Boer War.

The account of Lord Roberts's services in the Indian Mutiny is the same as the original sketch, which was based on my "History of the Indian Mutiny, reviewed and illustrated from original documents." Lord Roberts, who took part in the stern conflict, and whose name is in the list of the wounded, kindly described to me on the theatre of their enactment the principal operations of the siege of Delhi.

The story of the Second Afghan War, 1878-1880, is chiefly told from Lord Roberts's dispatches—and what the Duke of Wellington said of his own Indian dispatches is applicable to

them. "They show the same attention to details—to the pursuit of all means, however small, that could promote success." It is on the sure ground of official dispatches that I have mainly relied, but they have been fortified by the Official History of the war and contemporary literature. It has also been my privilege to have known men who took part in the Afghan campaign. The account of the disaster at Maiwand was written thirty years ago from narratives supplied to me by some of the survivors.

The account of Lord Roberts's South African campaign is also mainly based on his own dispatches, collated with "The Official History of the War," "*The Times* History," "The Official German History of the War," and fresh material. My earnest endeavour has been to tell the story of the Boer War without wounding the susceptibilities of any one of the brave men and able commanders who fought against us. Both combatants were convinced that their cause was just. It is due in a large measure to the humane policy pursued during the war, and the chivalrous conduct of the British soldier towards the inhabitants, that we are receiving to-day the not less chivalrous response of a people who, twelve years ago, were our resolute enemies in the field and are now determined to help us "to maintain," says General Botha, once our most distinguished foe, "the security and integrity of the Empire."

It was not only as a commander in two successful campaigns that Lord Roberts's ability for the business of war has been displayed. The details of his administration as Commander-in-Chief in India, which are now given, will enable the reader to form a judgment as to his administrative talent and to realise

the hard and splendid work he did towards making the Indian Army a most efficient fighting machine.

Lord Roberts's speeches on musketry training and artillery practice, from which numerous extracts are here published, testify to the far sight of the soldier, who prophesied that "in future wars superiority of fire would tell even more than in the past," and that great guns would be an even more important factor in future battles.

A chapter deals with a record of the veteran's last glorious campaign—a campaign against the ignorance of the country, against the apathy of the country, and against a long-standing prejudice of the country. By his bold action he knew he had embraced the unpopular side; he had entered upon a bitter and feverish contest which would demand a considerable amount of toil; he would have to encounter bitter opponents and at times meet a hostile auditory. But every consideration of mere prudence was absorbed in the great ruling passion—the safety of England—"England that to me has been so much; England that for me has done so much."

In relating the long and memorable career of a great soldier, my labours have been greatly facilitated by the assistance rendered me by Mr. F. G. Stokes, who has corrected my proof sheets and made many important suggestions. Professor R. S. Rait, the author of "The Life and Campaigns of Field-Marshal Viscount Gough," a complete and powerful biography of a noble-minded soldier, has lessened the many difficulties of my task by his helpful criticism. I am under special obligation to Lord Roberts for his kind permission to insert extracts from his letters written to me, and to make use of other letters and

fresh material illustrating the history of his campaigns. But the undivided responsibility for the statements made and the views expressed in these pages, and for the use of the materials entrusted to me, rests with myself.

G. W. FORREST.

Iffley, Oxon

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THE LIFE OF LORD ROBERTS

CHAPTER I

EARLY YEARS

WATERFORD is one of the most ancient and famous cities of Ireland. Perhaps there are few spots more beautiful in a beautiful island than Cuan-na-Grioth, the Harbour of the Sun, as it was called in the days of old. It is "The gentle Suire," says Spenser, which "adorns rich Waterford." It is pleasant to watch in autumnal sunshine the broad waters seeking the sea; it is pleasant to look across them and gaze on the Golden Vale with majestic slopes of the Cummeragh Mountains in the distance. There are a few signs of its former life and history in the present aspect of Waterford. On the quay there is Reginald's Tower, a visible memorial of the old Danish city of the Suir. When Richard de Clare, the Strongbow, assailed and captured the Danish stronghold it was in Reginald's Tower that he was married to Eva, the daughter of Dermot, king of Leinster, and became heir to the rich kingship. A portion of the wall of the Anglo-Norman city still remains. The cathedral, whose tall slender spire rises high above the city, is built on the site of the Danish church which was made the cathedral of the See of Waterford in 1096. After having suffered "improvements," it was rebuilt in 1774, with a young citizen of promise as architect. The young citizen was John Roberts, great-grandfather of the brave and famous soldier who is the subject of these

memoirs. He married the heiress of Major Sautelle, who fought under William III. at the battle of the Boyne. The Sautelles were a leading family in the colony of Huguenots who settled in Waterford after the Edict of Nantes. To John Roberts and his wife twenty-four children were born, and one of his sons, the Rev. John Roberts, Rector of Kell St. Nicholas, married Anne, daughter of the Rev. Abraham Sandys of Dublin. One of their sons was General Sir Abraham Roberts, father of him with whom we are concerned. In the chancel of the French church where the Huguenots used to worship, now an interesting ruin, are buried some of Lord Roberts's ancestors. It is easy to lay too much stress on race, but his vivacity of intellect, his swiftness of perception, his dash, may be in some measure due to his French blood.

On the 1st of January, 1803, Abraham Roberts, who had served in the Royal Army, was gazetted an ensign in the Army of the Honourable East India Company. He landed in India at the critical period in which the government of the vast continent was to pass into the hands of the English. It is hard to realise that the military career of Abraham Roberts and his son, whose name is so honoured and treasured by Englishmen, covers the story of the expansion of British dominion in India from the swamps of Bengal to the Himalayas. Soon after Ensign Roberts was posted to his first regiment it became apparent that Scindia, Holkar, and the French, with the Bhoonsla and other minor Mahratta chiefs were all in alliance against the British Government. Then followed one of the most memorable campaigns on record. On the 23rd of September, 1803, General Arthur Wellesley, whose whole force numbered only 4,500 British troops (of which one regiment of cavalry and two of infantry were Europeans), attacked a formidable position defended by 10,000 disciplined infantry, thousands of horse and 100 cannon, and won the decisive battle of Assaye.

The victory of Argaon, a memorable and fine bit of work, followed, and the strong mountain fortress of Gawilgurh was captured in December. Meanwhile Lord Lake was carrying out a series of brilliant operations in Hindustan. He left Cawnpore in August, 1803, defeated Perron's cavalry at Alighar, and on the 4th of September four companies of the 76th Regiment and a battalion of native infantry, led by the gallant Monson, carried in the face of a smashing fire of musketry and grape the fort of Alighar, hitherto deemed impregnable, and defended on all sides with the utmost obstinacy. Seven days later Lake defeated on the plains of Delhi a vast force both of cavalry and infantry, commanded by one of the officers of the famous military adventurer, Perron. Shah Alam, the Moghul Emperor, whose eyes had been put out by the Rohillas, was released from an insulting and rigorous confinement. It was right that adequate arrangements should be made for the Emperor and his family. But it was a fatal blunder to allow him to maintain the imperial name and state, the sovereign power over the city of Delhi and the domains assigned for the support of the royal family. Grave evil came of it. On the 11th of May, 1857, a Moghul emperor, owing to the mutiny of a few sepoy regiments, once more reigned in Delhi. On the 21st of September a royal salute proclaimed that the British were again masters in Delhi. A few days later Lieutenant Frederick Roberts, the son of General Sir Abraham Roberts, went to see at Delhi the last of the Moghul emperors who was a prisoner; "the old man," he writes, "looked most wretched."

After his victory at Delhi, Lake first marched to Muttra and then to Agra, and on the 10th of October drove the enemy from the town and from the deep ravines around it. On the 18th of October the stupendous fortress built by Akbar, the greatest of the Moghuls, capitulated, and the treasury, arsenal and 162

guns became the spoil of the victors. On the 1st of November Lake, after a desperate conflict, gained the crowning victory of Laswaree. Scindia and the Raja of Berar sued for peace, and before the close of the year treaties were signed, by which a vast accession of territory was acquired and the bounds of British dominion extended from the Bay of Bengal north-westward to the Himalayas and the Punjab frontier. In 1805 Abraham Roberts accompanied Lord Lake in the famous pursuit of Holkar across the Sutlej. Two years later he acted as Major of Brigade to Major-General Dickens at two sieges long since forgotten—Kamonah, or Komana, about 64 miles south-east of Delhi; and Ganaurie, the stronghold of a refractory zemindar named Dhundia Khan. After a siege of three weeks an attempt was made to take the former by assault (18th November, 1807), but the British force was driven back after a desperate tussle. One hundred and five men of the British force were killed and four hundred and thirty-six were wounded in the assault. William Duff, who commanded a brigade, Radcliffe Kirk and many other brave men died that day, but few Englishmen have ever heard of the desperate assault on Komana. The enemy did what the rebels did in the Mutiny. They evacuated the fort at night. Ganaurie, some seventeen miles from Komana, was invested, and surrendered as soon as a breach was made.

Abraham Roberts, like his son, was not only a gallant soldier but an active-minded administrator. In 1814 he was appointed to the Public Works Department, whose operations were then chiefly confined to the construction of all State buildings, civil and military.

At the close of that year war broke out with Nepal, and Lieutenant Roberts re-joined his regiment. He was present at Kalunga when Rollo Gillespie, the hero of Vellore, was shot dead whilst leading a hundred dismounted men of his

well-beloved dragoons to the ramparts. In the defiles of Nepal Lieutenant Roberts got his first experience of mountain warfare. He commanded the battalion companies of the 1st Battalion 13th Native Infantry, when Major Richards took possession of a ridge a mile north of the fort of Jythuk and had to abandon it for want of ammunition after a desperate resistance. In April, Roberts accompanied Major Richards, as staff-officer, when he attacked a strong stockade and captured the Gurkhas' commander. The Gurkhas fought with conspicuous valour, and all through the two campaigns proved themselves to be brave, honourable highlanders. In March, 1816, peace was concluded. The British Government obtained a large cession of territory, but they also obtained something far more valuable. The Indian Army gained the first three of those battalions of Gurkhas, which have a high title to be regarded as the finest soldiers in our Indian Army. At the close of the Nepal Campaign Lieutenant Roberts returned to the Public Works Department: "His activity, practical knowledge and integrity," wrote his Chief, "is wanting to look after the valuable public property in the extensive district of Rohilcund." In 1824 Lord Amherst, who had succeeded the Marquis of Hastings as Governor-General, was forced to engage in a war with Burma. The Burmese general carried as part of his equipment a set of golden fetters in which the Governor-General was to be brought prisoner to the Court of Ava. Captain Roberts volunteered for active service, but he was politely informed that he filled a very responsible situation under Government, and "it is in it your services will be most useful." The Military Secretary added: "Everyone who is acquainted with you knows well that if storming a stockade formed any part of your duty you would go at it like an Irishman." In 1826 Abraham Roberts received his majority, and two years later the Governor-General presented him with a handsome piece of

plate in recognition of "the services rendered by him as head of his department."

In 1830 Major Roberts married, as his second wife, Isabella, widow of Major Maxwell and daughter of Major Abraham Bunbury, of the 62nd Foot, and of Kilfeacle, county Tipperary. Their son, Frederick Sleigh Roberts, was born on the 30th of September, 1832, at Cawnpore, then a prominent military position, where his father, having returned to the active work of his profession, commanded the 1st Bengal Fusiliers.

After thirty years had been passed by him in India Colonel Roberts returned home on leave. The next two years he spent in England enjoying a well-earned rest. Frederick Roberts was hardly four years old when his parent, on returning to India, left him at Clifton, where he spent his childhood. He is described as a child with a delicate frame full of life and energy and buoyant with spirits. When he was thirteen years of age he was sent to Eton. He did not belong to the illustrious men (mainly the creation of speeches delivered on School Prize days) who, without having acquired the habits of work and study, obtained distinction in after life. Whatever Frederick Roberts has found to do he has done with his might. At Eton he was placed in the fourth form and gained a prize in mathematics. His stay at the great public school was short, but his attachment to Eton never grew less with the lapse of years. The lad's military ardour was already strong, and, looking forward to battle and fame, he entered the Royal Military College at Sandhurst in January, 1847. He remained there eighteen months, and by laborious study and unflinching application he won a prize for German and advanced three steps out of the six required for a commission without purchase. But Frederick Roberts was not destined to enter military life in the Royal Army. His father, who was again on leave in England, was anxious that he should enter the service in which he himself had

fought so long and zealously. It was in one important respect vitally different from the British Army. It was a service which a gentleman could regard as a profession for life, for provision was made for any who entered it to live as a gentleman—a service in which success was within the reach of all and which acknowledged no superiority except that of merit. Colonel Roberts procured for his son a nomination to Addiscombe, the Military College of the East India Company, which did such a splendid work in its day and sent to the Indian Army such soldiers as Eldred Pottinger, John Jacob, Henry Lawrence, James Brind, Henry Tombs, and Napier of Magdala. It was in February, 1850, that one of the greatest soldiers who ever graced the roll of the army that won for us an Empire answered his name to the roll-call at Addiscombe. The impression he made on his comrades was that of a lad of eighteen years of age, but looking older than his years, with a small but strong frame, well-cut features, penetrating eyes and a firm mouth. The year which the lad passed at Addiscombe was a year of firm progress. He obtained the rank of corporal, and in the final examination he came out ninth in a class of forty or fifty cadets. The East India Company distributed their army appointments into four grades. The highest in the examination got a few coveted commissions in the engineers; the next in the artillery, and the bulk of the cadets in the infantry. The cavalry was regarded as the crack corps, and a cornet's commission was given without competition by the Court of Directors. In Roberts's year the first six men were appointed to the engineers, the next two preferred the Bombay and Madras Artillery, and so the ninth, Frederick Roberts, was appointed on the 12th of December, 1851, Second Lieutenant in the Bengal Artillery.

Soon after Colonel Abraham Roberts's return to India, Lord Auckland issued directions for the formation of an army in Afghanistan. On October 18th the Governor-General pub-

lished the famous manifesto assigning the cause which led the Government of India to resolve on the fall of Dost Mohammed Khan, the reigning Amir, and the restoration of Shah Shooja, the exiled monarch. On the 1st of November Colonel Roberts was appointed to command the 4th Brigade of the Army of the Indus assembled at Ferozepore. It was composed of his own regiment and the 35th and 37th Bengal Native Infantry. On the 10th of December the Bengal contingent of the army set forth from Ferozepore, our northern frontier station, and on the 15th of January, 1839, the Bengal force entered the Sind territory. On the 24th of January, 1839, the headquarters reached Roree, raised on limestone crags in the bend of the little gulf formed by the Indus being impeded by the sandy isles on which the stronghold of Bukkur is built. In February, 1839, Brigadier Roberts was appointed to command in Upper Sind, and he superintended that most difficult operation the crossing of the park, treasure, commissariat stores and baggage of the Army, without a loss. Sir Henry Keane, Commander-in-Chief, expressed his warm approval of the service he rendered. In one of the most striking incidents of the First Afghan campaign, the storming of Ghazni, Brigadier Roberts commanded the 4th Brigade. After the storming party had established themselves in the citadel, the brigadier, with the 37th Native Infantry, was with Major-General Sir Willoughby Cotton when he "swept the ramparts and completed the capture of the strongest fortress in Afghanistan." For his services Brigadier Roberts received the thanks of the Commander-in-Chief and the Governor-General,* and was honoured with the distinction of a Companionship of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath.

After the occupation of Kabul, Brigadier Roberts was ap-

* Lord Keane's letter, 24th July, to Lord Auckland, and General Orders of the 18th November, 1839.

pointed to the command of the Shah's troops. On the 8th of July the Secretary to Government wrote to the envoy: "His Lordship in Council has a strong desire, in which he looks for your concurrence, to uphold the military position of Brigadier Roberts. Whenever the regular forces shall be withdrawn from Afghanistan, he will be your first military authority, and every British officer employed in that country should be led to look up to him."

Brigadier Roberts, being convinced of the urgent necessity of precautionary measures, deemed it his duty to urge the timely adoption of them, "and recommended that the Bala Hissar and other forts should be strengthened and well armed with artillery; that in them all the treasure, with an ample supply of grain, etc., should be lodged, and the troops quartered so that a larger force than under any other arrangement might be available for service.

"I deprecated the location of troops in remote or exposed situations where they could not be efficiently supported, and I entreated that the number of Afghan levies might be very limited, until we had officers better qualified by a more perfect knowledge of their language, customs, and feelings, to command them, and until, from observation and experience, some trustworthy judgment might be formed of their conduct, character, and utility. These levies proved to be mutinous and utterly useless. I was, in short, most anxious to be well prepared for any emergency which might arise in the heart of a foreign and hostile country, so far from our provinces and resources.

"The military chest for the whole army was kept in the Paymaster's quarters in the city, but in my opinion with great risk, particularly as the force at Caubul was often very limited. I, therefore, with the consent of the envoy, had it placed in the Bala Hissar, and at the same time laid in a supply of

grain, etc., where all was in perfect safety. However, shortly after, at the request of the Paymaster, but contrary to the wishes of myself and staff, the treasure was sent back to the city; at the first outbreak the Paymaster's house was attacked, the money fed the rebellion, and the force was left without funds. Sir Alexander Burns occupied a house contiguous to the Pay Office. He and those with him, with the whole of the Guard, were murdered.

"Unfortunately, precaution was deemed superfluous by the ruling local authority; the steps I had taken, and the measures I had recommended, were considered unnecessary; that they were not so we have had sad evidence, and I remain persuaded that had they been fully supported the dreadful disasters which carried mourning into so many families would never have befallen us, and which, but for the unflinching gallantry and perseverance of Pollock, Nott, and Sale, might have shaken our empire to its foundations."

Brigadier Roberts, finding that he "was not permitted to use his own judgment in military matters or exercise a salutary control over the Force," resigned his command to Brigadier Anquetil, who with eleven officers fell fighting to the last during the disastrous retreat from Kabul. In 1844 Roberts again proceeded to England on leave, and on his return was given the command of the Lahore Division.

On the 18th of April, 1852, Frederick Roberts, having been appointed to the Bengal Artillery, arrived at Calcutta and joined the headquarters of his illustrious corps at Dumdum, a military station about five and a half miles from the capital. He began to work diligently at his profession, but he longed impatiently for the period when the irksome routine of garrison duty should be exchanged for the substantial delights of war. The Court of Ava having refused to make amends for the injuries and insults which British subjects had suffered at the

hands of its servants, Lord Dalhousie resolved to exact reparation by force of arms. Two months before Roberts landed (10th February, 1852) war had been declared, and he wrote to his father begging him to use his influence to get him sent to Burma. The father replied that he expected soon to get the command of the Peshawar Division, and that he would like his son to join him. Four months later young Roberts got his marching orders, and his sorrow at not being sent on active service was mitigated by the thought that he was going to the great school of Indian soldiers—the northern marches of our empire.

Early in August Lieutenant Roberts left Dumdum for Peshawar, the great frontier station which guards the Khyber defiles, commanding the best known and most famous road from India to Kabul. The material change wrought in India during the reign of her late Imperial Majesty is brought home to us when we find that the journey to Peshawar, which now can be done in three days by rail, then occupied Roberts three months. As far as the sacred city of Benares he travelled up the noble Ganges in a barge towed by a steamer, and spent nearly a month on the river. From Benares to the important military station of Meerut, situated thirty-six miles from the imperial city of Delhi, the journey was done in a *dak-garry* (post-chaise), a vehicle now as extinct as the dodo. At Meerut Roberts came across for the first time the far-famed Bengal Horse Artillery, which had gained renown in many Indian fields of honour. Sir Charles Napier said of it, "Second to none in the world." The best recruits were picked for it, and if interest had a hand in the selection of the officers, so also had a good record on service. The uniform was picturesque and effective: a handsome helmet with red horsehair plume, a richly laced jacket, pouch and pouch-box with silver mountings, sabretache and schabraque, with the sphinx, Egypt, Ava, and

Bhurtpore devices, a hussar sash, buckskin breeches and huge boots. It was "the red men" whom the Afghans most dreaded, and so felt the Sikhs.

At Meerut the metalled and bridged imperial highway which the East India Company constructed from Calcutta to Peshawar then ended, and the remainder of the journey was done in a palanquin. It was not till November that Roberts reached Peshawar. Born at Cawnpore, and leaving India as an infant, he had enjoyed but little intercourse with his father, and they met almost as strangers. "We did not, however, long remain so: his affectionate greetings put an end to any feeling of shyness on my part, and the genial and kindly spirit which enabled him to enter into and sympathise with the feelings and aspirations of men younger than himself rendered the year I spent with him at Peshawar one of the brightest and happiest of my early life." * The son bears testimony that from the father he learned much about Afghanistán and the best mode of dealing with its people, thus gaining information which proved invaluable to him when, twenty years later, he found himself in command of an army in the field in that country.

From his arrival at Peshawar until the autumn of 1853 Lieutenant Roberts acted as aide-de-camp to his father, whilst at the same time he did duty with the artillery. General Roberts's health had now begun to fail, and on the 27th of November, 1853, having resigned the command of the Division, he left Peshawar.† In November, 1853, Lieutenant Roberts got the much coveted jacket, but his joy was somewhat lessened by the fact that the troop to which he was posted was stationed

* "Forty-one Years in India," by Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, V.C., G.C.B., vol. i., p. 18.

† On the 20th of March, 1865, General Abraham Roberts was promoted to be a Knight Commander of the Bath, and on the 8th of December, 1873, he received from the hands of Her Majesty Queen Victoria the Grand Cross of the Bath. He died on the 30th of December, 1873.

at Umballa. Life on the frontier has a charm for young men of the right stuff, and Roberts did not wish to quit Peshawar. A vacancy opportunely occurred in one of the troops of Horse Artillery at the station, and it was given to him. The troop to which he was posted "was composed of a magnificent body of men, nearly all Irishmen, most of whom could have lifted me up with one hand. They were fine riders, and needed to be so, for the stud-horses used for artillery purposes at that time were not the quiet, well-broken animals of the present day. I used to try my hand at riding them all in turn, and thus learnt to understand the amount of nerve, patience, and skill necessary to the making of a good Horse Artillery driver, with the additional advantage that I was brought into constant contact with the men. It also qualified me to ride in the officers' team for the regimental brake. The brake, it must be understood, was drawn by six horses, each ridden postillion-fashion by an officer."

When Lieutenant Roberts arrived at Peshawar, Colonel Mackeson was the commissioner or chief civil officer. "He was," wrote Lord Dalhousie, "the *beau idéal* of a soldier—cool to conceive, brave to dare, and strong to do. The Indian army was proud of his noble presence in its ranks—not without cause. On the dark pages of the Afghan War the name of Mackeson shone brightly, but the frontier was his post, and the future his field. The defiles of the Khyber and the peaks of the Black Mountains alike witness his exploits." On the evening of the 10th of September, 1853, Colonel Mackeson was seated in his veranda listening to appeals from his subordinate officers, when a man came up to him and presented a paper. He had spread his carpet, the Mohammedan's chapel, within sight of the house, and the attendants had noticed him all day earnestly engaged in prayer. Mackeson raised his arm to take the paper from his hand, when the assassin plunged a dagger into his breast. A brave native official threw himself upon the

man, and was wounded in the struggle to secure him. "Secure the man, but don't kill him," cried Mackeson as his strength swiftly ebbed away, and he was carried into the house. He died of the wound in a few days, and Herbert Edwardes, the great soldier-statesman, was ordered by the Governor-General to succeed him. Lord Dalhousie wrote to him: "In the whole range of Indian charges I know none which at the present time is more arduous than the commissionership of Peshawar. Holding it, you hold the outpost of the Indian Empire. Your past career and your personal qualities and abilities give me assurance that in selecting you I have chosen well for its command. . . . You have a fine career before you. God speed you in it, both for your own sake and for the sake of this empire." Edwardes had not been long at Peshawar before he concurred in the opinion expressed by General Abraham Roberts, that the time had come for cultivating friendly relations with Kabul. He therefore proposed to make a treaty with Dost Mohammed, but John Lawrence, who was then Chief Commissioner of the Punjab, opposed it on the grounds (1) "that you will never be able to get the Afghans to make a treaty, and (2) if they make it they will not keep it." Lord Dalhousie's opinion, however, fortunately coincided with that of Edwardes in favour of a treaty, and after long negotiations and the exercise of considerable tact and skill a treaty of friendship was drafted and signed on the 3rd of March, 1855. In the autumn of the following year, when India was startled by the news of the fall of Herat into Persian hands, Edwardes put forward proposals for rendering effective aid to the Afghan Amir. John Lawrence opposed the suggestions, but they were accepted by the Government of India, and the Amir was invited to a conference at Peshawar. On the 1st of January, 1857, took place the meeting between the Afghan Amir and the Chief Commissioner of the Punjab. The English camp

was pitched on the plain near Jamrood, and as his troop of Horse Artillery formed part of the escort, Roberts "was in the midst of it all."

Soon after the Peshawar conference the general commanding the division (General Reed) started on his tour of inspection, taking Roberts with him as his staff-officer. He had already acted for some time as a deputy-assistant-quartermaster-general, and with characteristic earnestness had thrown himself into the work and won the confidence of his chief. During the tour of inspection he met John Lawrence in camp at Rawal Pindi, and that shrewd judge of character, after he had been present at the general's inspection, offered Roberts an appointment in the Public Works Department. Happily the young subaltern refused the offer, for it meant forsaking soldiering, and towards the end of April, 1857, Roberts was ordered to report on the capabilities of Cherat, a hill not far from Peshawar, as a sanatorium for European soldiers. Here he first met Nicholson, who was engaged in introducing peace and order into the Peshawar valley.

"Nicholson," Roberts writes, "impressed me more profoundly than any man I had ever met before, or have ever met since. I have never seen any one like him. He was the *beau idéal* of a soldier and a gentleman. His appearance was distinguished and commanding, with a sense of power about him which to my mind was the result of his having passed so much of his life amongst the wild and lawless tribesmen, with whom his authority was supreme. Intercourse with this man amongst men made me more eager than ever to remain on the frontier, and I was seized with ambition to follow in his footsteps." But the young soldier was not destined to remain on the frontier.*

* "Forty-one Years in India," vol. i., p. 60.

CHAPTER II

THE INDIAN MUTINY

On the night of the 11th of May, 1857, Herbert Edwardes wrote to his wife: "The telegraph officer has just sent me a sad piece of news from Delhi, that the sepoys from Meerut had come over and burnt the bungalows there and killed several Europeans! This is serious, and we must expect the mutiny to spread to every station, if not put down with the bayonet at some one cantonment." The following day he wrote: "The plot is thickening. This morning we got the following telegraphic message from the Deputy-Adjutant-General at Meerut, dated twelve at night of May 10: 'Native troops in open mutiny. Cantonments south of Mall burnt. Several European officers killed. European troops under arms defending barracks. Electric telegraph wires cut.'" On the forenoon of the 13th, Brigadier Cotton, Brigadier Chamberlain, Colonel Nicholson, and Herbert Edwardes met in a council of war, convened by its president, General Reed, to decide what steps should be taken to ensure the safety of the Punjab. Lieutenant Roberts was present, having been summoned to record its decisions, and he was "greatly impressed by the calm and comprehensive view of the situation taken by Edwardes and Nicholson."

The decisions, according to the memorandum agreed upon, were: "First, General Reed, as senior officer in the Punjab, assumes the chief military command; and it is hereby resolved to organise a movable force instantly of thoroughly reliable troops to take the field, and get between the stations that *have*

mutinied and those that have *not,* and move on any point in the Punjab where mutiny has to be put down by force of arms." The formation of the movable column was approved by Sir John Lawrence and carried into execution without delay. Brigadier Neville Chamberlain was appointed to command it, and he chose the future Field-Marshal for his staff-officer. When Neville Chamberlain relinquished the command on proceeding to Delhi as Adjutant-General, Nicholson succeeded him, and, as his staff-officer, Lieutenant Roberts had opportunities of observing closely his splendid soldierly qualities and the workings of his grand but simple mind. "Nicholson was a born commander," he writes, "and this was felt by every officer and man with the column before he had been amongst them many days."

Lieutenant Roberts was at the fort of Phillour when a message came from Sir Henry Barnard, who commanded at Delhi, begging that all artillery officers not doing regimental duty might be sent to Delhi, where their services were urgently required. Roberts at once felt that the message applied to him. Nicholson was loth to part with him, but agreed that his first duty was to his regiment. At dawn next morning he left by mail-cart for Delhi. He proceeded to Umballa as fast as horses could carry him, but here a difficulty arose. He had to change mail-carts, but the seats in the fresh vehicle had been engaged some days in advance. But Roberts determined to get on "by hook or by crook"—to use an ancient classic expression. He called on Douglas Forsyth, the Deputy-Commissioner, who said that he might have a seat in an extra cart that was leaving that night laden with small-arm ammunition. The offer was gladly accepted, and the journey resumed. On the evening of the 29th of June, Roberts, after a narrow escape from falling into the enemy's hands, reached our pickets at Delhi.

"The relief to us when we found ourselves safe inside our own pickets may be imagined. My father's old staff-officer, Henry Norman,* who was then Assistant-Adjutant-General at headquarters, kindly asked me to share his tent until I could make other arrangements. He had no bed to offer me, but I required none, as I was thoroughly tired out, and all I wanted was a spot on which to throw myself down. A good night's rest quite set me up. I awoke early, scarcely able to believe in my good fortune. I was actually at Delhi, and the city was still in the possession of the mutineers." And in their possession it remained for many a long day.

On joining the camp at Delhi, Roberts was appointed Deputy-Assistant-Quartermaster-General with the artillery. Two days later he first found himself under fire, and in the hard-fought encounter on the 14th of July he was wounded. On the afternoon of that day a column was formed to drive the enemy out of the suburbs. It consisted of six Horse-Artillery guns under Major Turner and Captain Money, the 1st Fusiliers under Major Jacob, and Major Coke's corps of Punjab Rifles, with a few of the Guides Cavalry and Hodson's Horse, and the Kohat Risala. Brigadier-General Chamberlain accompanied the column, and on passing the front of Hindu Rao's ridge it was joined by Major Reid with all the available men from his position. Under a shower of grape the troops moved on till they came to a wall lined with the enemy, and they stopped short instead of pushing up to it. "Then Chamberlain, seeing that the men hesitated to advance, leaped his horse clean over the wall into the midst of the enemy, and dared the men to follow, which they did, but he got a ball in his shoulder."

While the Fusiliers and Coke's men were driving the mass of the enemy through the gardens to the right, Hodson went

* The late Field-Marshal Lord Napier of Magdala.

with the Guides, Gurkhas, and part of the Fusiliers along the Grand Trunk Road leading right into the gates of Delhi. "We were exposed to a heavy fire of grape from the walls, and musketry from behind trees and rocks; but pushing on, we drove them right up to the very walls, and then were ordered to retire. This was done too quickly by the artillery, and some confusion ensued, the troops hurrying back too fast. The consequence was the enemy rallied, bringing up infantry, then a large body of cavalry, and behind them again two guns to bear on us." Hodson managed to get eight of his horsemen in front, and to rally some of the Guides infantry; Greville and Major Jacob coming up at that moment, brought forward a few scattered Fusiliers. A body of the enemy's horse now advanced to the charge. But at Hodson's command his scanty band opened fire and the rebel cavalry stopped, reeled, turned, and fled in confusion. Their guns were left deserted, and Hodson attempted to steady his men for a charge to capture them.

"We were within thirty paces," he writes, two days after the event, to his wife; "twenty-five resolute men would have been enough; but the soldiers were blown, and could not push on in the face of such odds, unsupported as we were, for the whole of the rest of the troops had retired. My eight horsemen stood their ground, and the little knot of officers used every exertion to aid us, when suddenly two rascals rushed forward with lighted portfires in their hands and fired the guns loaded with grape in our faces; and when the smoke cleared away we found, to our infinite disgust and chagrin, that they had limbered up the guns and were off at a gallop. We had then to effect our retreat, to rejoin the column, under a heavy fire of grape and musketry, and many men and officers were hit in doing it. I managed to get the Guides to retire quietly, fighting as they went, and fairly checking the enemy, on which I galloped back and brought up two guns, when we

soon stopped all opposition, and drove the last Pandy into Delhi."

Our loss was 15 men killed, 16 officers and 177 men wounded. Among the wounded were "Chamberlain shot through the arm, and little Roberts." "Little Roberts," while helping the artillery driver to keep the horses quiet under an incessant fire, suddenly felt "a tremendous blow on my back, which made me faint and sick, and I was afraid I should not be able to remain on my horse. The powerless feeling, however, passed off, and I managed to stick on until I got back to camp. I had been hit close to the spine by a bullet, and the wound would probably have been fatal but for the fact that a leather pouch for caps, which I usually wore in front near my pistol, had somehow slipped round to the back: the bullet passed through this before entering my body, and was thus prevented from penetrating very deep."

The wound, though comparatively slight, kept Roberts on the sick list for a fortnight, and for more than a month he could not mount a horse or put on a sword. He, however, recovered in time to serve in No. 2 Battery, which was constructed immediately in front of Ludlow Castle, 500 yards from the Kashmere Bastion. Here he had a narrow escape, being knocked down by a round shot which came through an embrasure. On the morning of the assault, being no longer required with the breaching battery, he was ordered to return to staff duty, and accordingly joined the general at Ludlow Castle. Discouraging reports were received as to the progress of the assaulting columns, and Roberts was sent to find out how far they were true.

"Just after starting on my errand, while riding through the Kashmir gate, I observed by the side of the road a doolie, without bearers, and with evidently a wounded man inside. I dismounted to see if I could be of any use to the occupant,

when I found, to my grief and consternation, that it was John Nicholson, with death written on his face. He told me that the bearers had put the doolie down and gone off to plunder; that he was in great pain, and wished to be taken to the hospital. He was lying on his back, no wound was visible, and but for the pallor of his face, always colourless, there was no sign of the agony he must have been enduring. On my expressing a hope that he was not seriously wounded, he said, 'I am dying: there is no chance for me.' The sight of that great man lying helpless and on the point of death was almost more than I could bear. Other men had daily died around me, friends and comrades had been killed beside me, but I never felt as I felt then—to lose Nicholson seemed to me at that moment to lose everything."

On the morning of the 24th of September, whilst Nicholson's funeral was taking place, Roberts marched out of Delhi with the column that was dispatched to Cawnpore. "It was a matter of regret to me that I was unable to pay a last tribute of respect to my loved and honoured friend and commander by following his body to the grave, but I could not leave the column."

Before dawn, September 29, the advance-guard of the column arrived at four cross-roads about a mile and a half from Bulandshahr.* It is a civil station forty-two miles from Meerut and about five from the fort of Malagarh. One of the

* "Early in the morning of the 28th Norman [Field-Marshal Sir Henry Norman, G.C.B.], Lyall [Sir Alfred Lyall, G.C.I.E., K.C.B.] and I, marching with Watson's cavalry two or three miles in advance of the column, arrived at cross roads, one leading to Bulandshahr, the other to Malagarh, a fort belonging to a Mahomedan of the name of Waldad Khan, who, when the British rule was in abeyance, assumed authority over the district in the name of the Emperor of Delhi. We halted, and having put our piquets, lay down and waited for the dawn. From information obtained by the civil officers with the column, we suspected that large numbers of the mutineers were collected in the neighbourhood."—"Forty-one Years in India," by Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, V.C., G.C.B., vol. i., p. 260.

roads led to Malagarh, and one straight ahead to the town and civil station. At sight of our approach a picket of the enemy fell back, and the scouts brought the news that they intended to give battle at the station. The rebels' position was undoubtedly strong. Their guns in battery commanded the entrance, the gardens and offices were occupied by their infantry, around which bodies of horse hovered. At the junction of the four roads a reserve was immediately formed under Major Turner to protect the baggage. It was at once attacked in flank by cavalry and guns, but they were quickly driven off with loss. The remainder of the infantry and the artillery were drawn up on the left of the road. The advance-guard was strengthened by two of Captain Remington's Horse Artillery guns, and soon were in action, as the enemy opened at once down the road. Remington's guns swiftly returned the fire, and he was reinforced by the remainder of his troops. Bourchier with his battery took up his position more to the right, supported by a squadron of Punjab cavalry and a portion of Her Majesty's 75th. The enemy's guns awakened on them, while from the high crops and surrounding gardens the rebels sent a stream of musketry. But the cross fire was fatal to their battery, and it was silenced. A few salvos of grape cleared the front, and the artillery was ordered to advance. "Lieutenant Roberts of the artillery, who seemed ubiquitous, brought the order at a gallop. The guns charged and took the battery, the enemy scampering before us as we came up to it. Lieutenant Roberts was first at the guns. A second burst, after clearing our front with grape, brought us to the goal, the enemy flying before us like sheep."

Meanwhile a second column, consisting of the greater portion of the cavalry, with two guns under Lieutenant Cracklow, had advanced into the town, and were for a time exposed to a most severe fire in the street. "Four men out of one gun crew

were wounded, and the gun was worked with difficulty. The cavalry charged and routed several large bodies of the enemy. In pursuing them they became entangled in the narrow streets, and at a gateway leading out of the town a hard fight ensued." "Sarel was wounded in the act of running a sepoy through the body, the forefinger of his right hand being taken off by a bullet, which then passed through his left arm; Anson was surrounded by mutineers and performed prodigies of valour, for which he was rewarded with the Victoria Cross." Lieutenant Roberts had a narrow escape. In the midst of the mêlée he observed a sepoy taking deliberate aim at him, and tried to get at him. "He fired; my frightened animal reared and received in his head the bullet which was intended for me."

Early on the morning of the 10th of October, 1857, the column reached Agra. As the local authorities said that the enemy were nowhere in the neighbourhood, the brigadier gave orders for the camp to be pitched as soon as the tents should arrive, and he considered (wrongly, as Lord Roberts frankly admits) there was no necessity for posting pickets until the evening. Roberts and Norman, with a few others, got permission to breakfast in the fort. They had scarcely sat down when they were startled by the report of a gun, then another and another. Hurrying down the stairs, they jumped on their horses and galloped out of the fort and along the road in the direction of the firing. On reaching the scene of action a strange sight broke upon them. "Independent fights were going on all over the parade-ground. Here, a couple of cavalry soldiers were charging each other. There, the game of bayonet *versus* sword was being carried on in real earnest." Roberts and Norman rode off in different directions to search for the brigadier. While thus employed the former was stopped by a dismounted sowar, "who danced about in front of me, waving his *pagri* (turban) before

the eyes of my horse with one hand and brandishing his sword with the other. I could not get the frightened animal near enough to use my sword, and my pistol (a Deane and Adams revolver), with which I tried to shoot my opponent, refused to go off, so I felt myself pretty well at his mercy, when, to my relief, I saw him fall, having been run through the body by a man of the 9th Lancers who had come to my rescue."

Gradually the enemy were beaten off, hotly pursued, and their camp captured. After a halt of three days the column continued its march, and reached Cawnpore on the 26th of October, where for the first time Roberts heard the details of that great tragedy, and saw the sights which had driven our soldiers mad. But the day after the arrival of the Delhi column orders reached Hope Grant from Sir Colin Campbell to get into communication with the Alumbagh, a garden-house surrounded by a lofty wall, where Havelock and Outram had left their sick and wounded and spare stores. On the 31st of October Hope Grant left Cawnpore and crossed the Ganges, but the next day the brigadier was bidden to halt until the Commander-in-Chief should arrive. On the 9th of November Sir Colin joined the column, accompanied by his Chief of Staff, Brigadier-General Mansfield. The following morning arrived Kavanagh, the brave Irishman, who, disguised as a native, had passed through the enemy's lines.* He brought a letter from Outram stating his views with regard to the route that should be followed by Sir Colin Campbell, in which the line proposed was clearly marked. Sir Colin readily accepted Outram's plan of advance, and strictly adhered to it. On the morning of the 12th the column began its march to the Alumbagh, and after halting there for two days to perfect the smallest detail, Sir Colin Campbell set forth for the relief of the Residency. By noon on the 14th he had occupied the Dilkusha and Martinière,

* History of the Indian Mutiny," by G. W. Forrest, vol. ii., pp. 120-6.

where he fixed his headquarters.* The next day was devoted to making preparations for a further advance. In the evening Roberts was told that the Commander-in-Chief desired his presence at the Martinière. On reporting himself to his Excellency, Sir Colin Campbell informed him that he was not satisfied that a sufficient reserve of small-arm ammunition had been brought with the force, and that the only chance of getting more in time was to send back to the Alumbagh for it that night. Sir Colin asked Roberts if he thought he could find his way back in the dark. "I answered, 'I am sure I can.'" The Commander-in-Chief impressed upon him strongly the necessity for caution, told him that he might take what escort he thought necessary, but that whatever happened he must be back by daybreak, as he had signalled to Outram that the force would advance on the morrow. The old Scotsman grimly desired that the ordnance officer whose fault it was that sufficient ammunition had not been brought should go back with Roberts and be left at the Alumbagh. Accompanied by Younghusband, Gough, and the unfortunate ordnance officer, with two squadrons of cavalry, and 150 camels, Roberts started at 9 P.M. for the Alumbagh. After an adventurous ride in the dark the Alumbagh was reached, and at dawn he returned with the ammunition, and as he rode up to the Martinière he could see old Sir Colin, only partially dressed, standing on the steps in evident anxiety at his not having arrived. Sir Colin congratulated him on the success of the expedition, and told him to get something to eat as quickly as possible, for they were to start immediately the men had breakfasted. "I went off to the Artillery camp, and refreshed the inner man with a steak cut off a gun-bullock which had been killed by a round-shot on the 14th."

As soon as the men had breakfasted on the 16th the force

* "History of the Indian Mutiny," by G. W. Forrest, vol. ii., p. 138.

advanced. Roberts was ordered to accompany the advance-guard, behind which rode Sir Colin, who had Kavanagh with him, and his general knowledge of the locality proved of great service. As the force was feeling its way along a narrow and tortuous lane it reached a corner which turns sharply to the left, and, winding round it, the British were suddenly deluged by a storm of bullets from the Sikandarbagh. The bank was so steep that it seemed impossible for artillery to ascend it. But men and horses did manage to clamber up it, the guns opened fire, and in an hour a breach was made. The bugle sounded for the assault.

"It was a magnificent sight—a sight never to be forgotten —that glorious struggle to be the first to enter the deadly breach, the prize to the winner of the race being certain death! Highlanders and Sikhs, Punjabi Mohammedans, Dogras, and Pathans all vied with each other in the generous competition. A Highlander was the first to reach the goal, and was shot dead as he jumped into the enclosure; a man of the 4th Punjab Infantry came next, and met the same fate. Then followed Captain Burroughs and Lieutenant Cooper of the 93rd, and immediately behind him their colonel (Ewart), Captain Lumsden of the 30th Bengal Infantry, and a number of Sikhs and Highlanders as fast as they could scramble through the opening. A drummer-boy of the 93rd must have been one of the first to pass that grim boundary between life and death, for when I got in I found him just inside the breach, lying on his back quite dead—a pretty, innocent-looking, fair-haired lad, not more than fourteen years of age."

A party made a rush for the gateway, the doors of which were on the point of being closed, when a Mohammedan (Mukarrab Khan by name) "pushed his left arm, on which he carried a shield, between them, thus preventing their being shut: on his hand being badly wounded by a sword-cut, he

drew it out, instantly thrusting in the other arm, when the right hand was all but severed from the wrist. But he gained his object—the doors could not be closed, and were soon forced open altogether, upon which the 4th Punjab Infantry, the 53rd, 93rd, and some of the detachments, swarmed in."

Roberts entered immediately behind the storming party, and the scene that ensued, he states, "requires the pen of a Zola to depict." The pen of a Tolstoi would do it more justice.

"The rebels, never dreaming that we should stop to attack such a formidable position, had collected in the Sikandarbagh to the number of upwards of 2,000, with the intention of falling upon our right flank as soon as we should become entangled amongst the streets and houses of the Hazratganj. They were now completely caught in a trap, the only outlets being by the gateway and the breach, through which our troops continued to pour. There could therefore be no thought of escape, and they fought with the desperation of men without hope of mercy, and determined to sell their lives as dearly as they could. Inch by inch they were forced back to the pavilion, and into the space between it and the north wall, where they were all shot or bayoneted. There they lay in a heap as high as my head, a heaving, surging mass of dead and dying inextricably entangled. It was a sickening sight, one of those which, even in the excitement of battle and the flush of victory, make one feel strongly what a horrible side there is to war. The wretched wounded men could not get clear of their dead comrades, however great their struggles, and those near the top of this ghastly pile of writhing humanity vented their rage and disappointment on every British officer who approached by showering upon him abuse of the grossest description."

After the capture of the Sikandarbagh the troops, fighting for every inch of the ground, proceeded to the Shah Nujjeef mausoleum, enclosed by high loopholed walls of masonry, and

reached it as the afternoon was waning. Sir Colin Campbell desired to carry it before nightfall, and Barnston was instructed to bring up his battalion of detachments under cover of the guns. As the troops advanced in skirmishing order their leader fell, and it was seen that the men were wavering.

"Norman was the first to grasp the situation. Putting spurs to his horse, he galloped into their midst, and called on them to pull themselves together; the men rallied at once, and advanced into the cover from which they had for the moment retreated. I had many opportunities for noting Norman's coolness and presence of mind under fire. On this particular occasion these qualities were most marked, and his action was most timely."

More infantry were brought up without avail. The afternoon was passing away, and it seemed essential to carry the Shah Nujjeef. The old chief placed himself at the head of the 93rd, and under a heavy fire led them to some cover in close proximity to the walls. The naval guns were dragged by the seamen and the Madras Fusiliers close to the walls, and commenced to breach. The enemy at length lost heart and fled out the other side, so that an entrance was effected without difficulty.*

Night came on, and the troops lay down in lines with their arms. Next morning the contest was renewed. Fire was opened on the mess-house, and, in the afternoon, it was captured. As from thence the advancing troops could see the British flag flying on the positions captured by Sir J. Outram the previous day, Lord Roberts states Sir Colin Campbell ordered him to procure a regimental colour and place it on one of the turrets of the building.

"I rode off accordingly to the 2nd Punjab Infantry, stand-

* "History of the Indian Mutiny," by G. W. Forrest, C.I.E., vol. ii., pp. 153-9.

ing close by, and requested the commandant, Captain Green, to let me have one of his colours. He at once complied, and I galloped with it to the mess-house. As I entered, I was met by Sir David Baird (one of Sir Colin's aides-de-camp) and Captain Hopkins of the 53rd Foot, by both of whom I was assisted in getting the flag with its long staff up the inconveniently narrow staircase, and in planting it on the turret nearest the Kaisarbagh, which was about 850 yards off. No sooner did the enemy perceive what we were about, than shot after shot was aimed at the colour, and in a very few minutes it was knocked over, falling into the ditch below. I ran down, picked it up, and again placed it in position, only for it to be once more shot down and hurled into the ditch, just as Norman and Lennox (who had been sent by Sir Colin to report what was going on in the interior of the Kaisarbagh) appeared on the roof. Once more I picked up the colour, and found that this time the staff had been broken in two. Notwithstanding, I managed to prop it up a third time on the turret, and it was not again hit, though the enemy continued to fire at it for some time." *

After the capture of the mess-house the troops pressed forward with great vigour and lined the wall separating us from the Moti Mahal. Here the enemy made their last stand. Captain Wolseley† sent for some sappers, who coming up made openings in the wall through which the troops poured and attacked the network of buildings within. The rebels fought stubbornly, but they were driven at the bayonet from room to room, and after the lapse of some time thrust forth from the vast enclosure. The relieving force and the garrison were now separated only by a space not more than 450 yards across, but

* "Forty-one Years in India," vol. i., p. 337. MS. letter from Sir David Baird.

† Field-Marshal Viscount Wolseley, K.P., etc.

it was exposed to a hot fire of musketry and a heavy cannonade. Outram and Havelock and their respective staffs, however, safely made the dangerous passage across. The party then proceeded to meet Sir Colin at the mess-house. While threading the passages and courts of the Moti Mahal they nearly lost their lives. A shell fell near Havelock, and bounding against a wall, burst at his feet. He was prostrated by the concussion but sustained no other injury. The distance from the Moti Mahal to the mess-house was only twenty-five yards, but an iron tempest swept across the road. Colonel Napier* and Lieutenant Sitwell were wounded in running the gauntlet of fire, but Outram and Havelock crossed over unhurt to the outside wall of the mess-house enclosure. An opening was quickly made by the sappers, through which they entered. On the sward sloping down from the mess-house stood Colin Campbell, and a blaze of shot and musketry from the Kaisarbagh rose upon them as the three veterans met.

Norman and Roberts obtained permission to accompany Havelock to the Residency, and as they entered it they saw a strange sight. Not only the old garrison but also the men belonging to the first relieving force bore manifest tokens of what they had gone through—bad food, foul air, and noisome exhalations had left their mark.

"In the ragged summer clothing in which they had entered, these men looked worn and hungry, and in one corner was seen the curious spectacle—I suppose common enough in the garrison—of a British soldier making *chuppaties* (unleavened cakes) for himself out of his scanty allowance of flour. Entering a battery which was trying to silence some of the enemy's guns across the river, these officers saw a few men grimed with smoke and without coat or waistcoat, all so alike in costume and appearance that it was only by asking which was the

* The late Field-Marshal Lord Napier of Magdala.

officer that they ascertained they were standing close to one they well knew—one of the bravest officers of the Bengal Artillery."

When they came to the Bailey Guard and looked at the battered wall and gateway, not an inch without a mark from a round shot or bullet, "we marvelled," writes Lord Roberts, "that Aitken and Loughman could have managed to defend it for nearly five months. There was plenty of evidence on all the surrounding buildings of the dangerous nature of the service which they and their gallant native comrades had so admirably performed. Although we were pressed for time, we could not resist stopping to speak to some of the native officers and sepoys, whose magnificent loyalty throughout the siege was one of the most gratifying features of the Mutiny."

On the 23rd of November Sir Colin Campbell accomplished the removal of the garrison from the Residency, a skilful movement which merits every praise. The sound judgment of the commander was manifested in the foresight with which he examined and provided for every contingency. On the afternoon of the next day he moved to the Alumbagh. Leaving Outram with a strong column to guard it, Sir Colin on the morning of the 27th of November, with the women and children rescued from Lucknow, the wounded of his own and Outram's force, together with treasure and artillery and engineer parks, started from the Alumbagh. The convoy extended along at least ten miles of road. To guard it Sir Colin had only 3,000 men, amongst whom were the remnant of the gallant 32nd, who had so stoutly defended the Residency, the sepoys, whose fidelity and courage can never be too highly appraised, and the few native pensioners who had loyally responded to the call of Sir Henry Lawrence to come to our aid in the darkest hour. Slowly did the long train wend its way, and it was sunset before Sir Colin passed Bunnee bridge and encamped

two miles beyond. During the day had been heard the low tremulous sound which denotes heavy firing at a distance, and on reaching Bunnee the officer commanding that outpost reported that he had not only heard a cannonade during the day, but it had been audible during the greater part of the previous day. No news had reached Sir Colin from Cawnpore for some time, and now the cause of the silence became evident: the Gwalior Contingent were attacking Windham. The contingency, of which he had never lost sight, and which had influenced him in limiting his operations at Lucknow to the withdrawal of the garrison, had arisen. Sir Colin also knew how slender was the force at Windham's disposal, how strong the enemy were, and the grave consequences of Windham's not being able to hold his own. With Cawnpore and the bridge of boats in the hands of the enemy, the situation of his force in Oudh would indeed be grave. To abandon the charge of the convoy was impossible. All must be pressed forward without delay. Orders were issued for a march on Cawnpore the following morning, and Cawnpore was thirty miles away.

At 9 A.M. on the 28th of November the column, preceded by the cavalry and artillery, resumed its march. At every step the sound of a heavy but distant cannonade became more distinct, but mile after mile was passed over and no news could be obtained. The anxiety and impatience of all became evident. "Louder and louder grew the roar; faster and faster became the march; long and weary was the way; tired and footsore grew the infantry; death fell on the exhausted wounded with a terrible rapidity; the travel-worn bearers could hardly stagger along under their loads; the sick men groaned and died—but still 'On! on!' was the cry." They had tramped on till noon without news, when a native suddenly jumped out of cover in a field and handed a letter in Greek characters to

the staff at the head of the advance-guard. It was addressed, "Most urgent, to General Sir Colin Campbell, or any officer commanding troops on the Lucknow road." "The letter was dated two days previously, and said that, unless affairs shortly took a favourable turn, the troops would have to retire into the entrenchment; that the fighting had been most severe; and that the enemy was very powerful, especially in artillery. It concluded by expressing a hope that the Commander-in-Chief would therefore see the necessity of pushing to their assistance with the utmost speed."* Soon he received two other notes in succession, announcing that "Windham was hard pressed; that he had been obliged to fall back from outside the city to his entrenchment." Three salvos were fired from the battery of the advance-guard to intimate the approach of coming aid, but it is doubtful whether they were ever heard, or, if heard, understood. Desirous of learning the exact state of the case, Sir Colin ordered Roberts to ride on as far as he could to the River Ganges, and if he found the bridge broken, to return at once; but if it were still in existence, to cross over, try to see the general, and bring back all the information he could obtain. Roberts started, took two sowars, found the bridge intact, pushed across, and got into the entrenchments. He was about to return to headquarters when loud cheers broke from the men, caused by the appearance of the Commander-in-Chief. Sir Colin Campbell had grown impatient, and leaving the infantry and artillery to follow, had pushed forward with the cavalry. On reaching Mungulwar, a strong and elevated position, he left these behind, with orders to Sir Hope Grant to pitch his camp there, and galloped on, escorted only by some of his staff. Six miles lay between him and the river bank. On they sped till they saw rising above the flat plain the city

* "A Lecture on the Relief of Lucknow," by Colonel H. W. Norman, C.B., p. 33.

of Cawnpore, and the forks of flames which flashed across the sky told it was in the hands of the enemy; the roar of guns proclaimed that a battle was raging. The Ganges, gilded with the rays of the setting sun, lay before them, and across its wide expanse they could trace a dark thread. The bridge of boats was safe. Harder they went till they reached the bank of the river, where they found a guard of British soldiers under a subaltern. He expressed his joy at seeing them, and stammered out, "We are at our last gasp." Unfortunate man! Sir Colin flew at him, as only Colin Campbell could when roused, and asked him how he dared to say of Her Majesty's troops that they were "at their last gasp." Then spurring his horse, Sir Colin, followed by his staff, galloped over the bridge and down the road till they rode into some infantry defending the outworks of the entrenchment. As Sir Colin entered the gate of the fort the men of the Rifle Brigade recognised the well-known face and wiry figure they had so often seen in the Crimea, and sent forth cheer after cheer. They knew that Cawnpore was saved.

The next morning Sir Colin ranged Peel's naval guns along the north bank of the river, and, having driven off the enemy, took his whole force and a vast convoy across the bridge. On the 3rd of December the women, children, and wounded were dispatched to Allahabad. On the 6th Sir Colin attacked and defeated the trained soldiers of the Gwalior Contingent. Roberts watched the advance, as one of the chief's staff, and took part in the chase after the flying enemy, which the old chief himself headed.

On the 23rd of December Sir Colin Campbell commenced his march towards Fatehgarh, and on the morning of the 2nd of January, 1858, a strong force of the rebels were found posted at the village of Khudaganj. As our troops advanced

the enemy hastily limbered up their guns and retired. A hot pursuit followed.

"The chase continued for nearly five miles, until daylight began to fail and we appeared to have got to the end of the fugitives, when the order was given to wheel to the right and form up on the road. Before, however, this movement could be carried out, we overtook a batch of mutineers, who faced about and fired into the squadron at close quarters. I saw Younghusband fall, but I could not go to his assistance, as at that moment one of his sowars was in dire peril from a sepoy who was attacking him with his fixed bayonet, and had I not helped the man and disposed of his opponent he must have been killed. The next moment I descried in the distance two sepoys making off with a standard, which I determined must be captured, so I rode after the rebels and overtook them, and while wrenching the staff out of the hands of one of them, whom I cut down, the other put his musket close to my body and fired; fortunately for me it missed fire, and I carried off the standard."

For these two acts of valour Lieutenant Roberts was awarded the Victoria Cross. A naval officer who was present with Peel's brigade wrote at this time:

"Lieutenant Roberts, of the Bengal Artillery, General Grant's Assistant Quartermaster-General, also made himself conspicuous by his gallantry in the cavalry pursuit, and earned the much-coveted distinction of the Victoria Cross. He is one of those rare men who, to uncommon daring and bravery in the field, and unflinching, hard-working discharge of duty in the camp, adds the charm of cheery and unaffected kindness and hospitality in the tent, and his acquaintance and friendship are high prizes to those who obtain them."

When Lord Canning decided that the siege and capture of Lucknow were to be undertaken at once, Sir Colin Camp-

bell issued a general order detailing the regiments, staff, and commanders who were to take part in it. Major-General Sir Hope Grant was appointed to the command of the cavalry division, and Roberts remained with him as Deputy-Assistant Quartermaster-General. On the 8th of February Hope Grant reached Oano, a village on the road to Lucknow, from which Havelock's veterans had, after a desperate hand-to-hand conflict, driven forth the enemy. He had been there but a few days when he was dispatched with a small compact force to make a detour to a small fortified place called Futtehpur Churassie, where the Nana was supposed to have taken refuge, about twenty-five miles north of the Cawnpore road and on the bank of the Ganges. On the morning of the 15th of February Hope Grant set out with his column, and, making his way almost entirely across country, reached his destination in two days. But the Nana had flown. After having blown up the fort, Hope Grant proceeded by short marches to Lucknow, clearing the country of rebels as he went. On the 23rd of February he reached Meeanjung, an old moderate-sized town, surrounded with a high loop-holed wall, "with circular bastions at the angles and at convenient distances along the sides. The gates were strongly fortified with bank, ditch and palisade in front of them." * After an hour's firing our guns had effected a practicable breach. The 53rd were ordered up, and the general, with a few words of encouragement, sent them to the assault. When they got near the walls they raised a loud shout, and, dashing through the water of the ditch, entered the breach. A short fight ensued. The soldiers pushed forward with the bayonet, and the rebels fled through the gate. Dire destruction awaited them. The Lancers ran them through, the 7th Hussars and Irregulars

* "Recollections of a Winter Campaign in India," by Captain O. J. Jones, R.N., p. 138.

cut them down. Five hundred were killed and four hundred made prisoners; but as they were principally townspeople, Hope Grant directed, "to their inexpressible surprise and delight," that they should be set at liberty. With a vigorous hand he guarded the rights of life and property of the inhabitants, but a general can only mitigate the evils and horrors of war. At the capture of Meeanjung occurred many piteous events which illustrate the misery that attends the glory of arms. In a house was discovered a poor woman tending a wounded child who had been shot through the side, while a young man, her nephew, was lying dead at her feet. Elsewhere, in a small hut, a workman was sitting at his loom, dead, with his hand in the act of arranging the thread. Another scene enacted itself that day, more piteous than the poet's picture of Priam when he "braved what none other man on earth hath braved before, to stretch forth my hand toward the face of the slayer of my sons." The walls of the town and some of the streets had to be levelled in order to render the place incapable of defence. Roberts, the Assistant Quartermaster-General, was superintending the work of destruction, when "an old, infirm man, who was sitting at the door of a house, entreated him to spare it, saying that yesterday morning he was the happy father of five sons: 'Three of them lie there'—pointing to three corpses; 'where the other two are, God only knows'; that he was old and a cripple, and that if his house was burned he would have nothing left but to lie down and die. Roberts, who is as good as he is brave, gave directions for sparing the old man's house; and I hope the two missing sons have escaped, and have returned to comfort his few remaining days." *

* "Recollections of a Winter Campaign in India," by Captain O. J. Jones, R.N., p. 145.

On the 25th of February Hope Grant's column marched to Mohan, situated on the bank of the Sai Naddi, a picturesque stream, and the next day, having crossed it by a beautiful old bridge, encamped on a wide plain. On the 1st of March Hope Grant received instructions from the Commander-in-Chief to march to Buntera, the centre of his army. The order, owing to some mistake of the messenger, had been delayed. It was therefore late in the day before the force started, and as the march was long, and a deep, narrow river had to be crossed, the moon had risen over the sandy plain, covered for miles with white tents, before Hope Grant and his column reached their encamping-ground.

Very early in the morning of the 2nd of March the first bugle sounded. It was followed by the shrill pipe of the boatswain's mate. Many a smouldering camp-fire cast its fitful glance upon the regiments as they fell in. A few lances glimmered in the firelight, and Sir Colin, accompanied by his small cavalry escort, rode up and inspected the Highlanders. As the grey dawn began to break they marched off with the pipers playing "The Campbells are coming." The siege of Lucknow had opened. The Dilkusha palace was reached, and Hope Grant was placed in charge of the pickets which were posted in and around it, a position for which he was admirably adapted. "He rode well, without fatigue to himself or his horse," writes Lord Roberts, "so that any duty entailing long hours in the saddle was particularly congenial to him. I invariably accompanied him on his rounds, and in after years I often felt that I owed Hope Grant a debt of gratitude for the practical lessons he gave me in outpost duty." Hope Grant accompanied Outram as second in command in the brilliant operations across the river, which so greatly conduced to the capture of Lucknow. Roberts was by Outram's side when the Chukur Kothe (the

race-stand of the former kings of Oudh) was captured. After the Moosabagh had been captured and Lucknow was ours, Hope Grant was ordered, on the 22nd of March, to proceed to a town twenty-five miles away from the capital, reported to be occupied by the enemy. At midnight the column started, but it was delayed by the guns taking a wrong turn when leaving Lucknow, and the enemy had fled before they reached the town. Hope Grant pushed on with his horse, and came in sight of the enemy in full retreat. He had his own regiment (the 2nd Punjab Cavalry), a squadron of the 1st Punjab Cavalry under Captain Cosserat, and three Horse Artillery guns. Captain Browne* was ordered to pursue. After a chase of two miles he came upon a body of mutineers formed up on an open plain. "The cavalry charged through them three times, each time thinning their ranks considerably; but they never wavered, and in the final charge avenged themselves by killing Macdonnel (the adjutant of the 2nd Punjab Cavalry) and mortally wounding Cosserat. I arrived on the ground with Hope Grant just in time to witness the last charge and the fall of these two officers, and, deplorable as we felt this to be, it is impossible not to admire the gallantry and steadiness of the sepoys, every one of whom fought to the death."

On the 25th Hope Grant's division crossed the Goomtee and encamped near the Dilkusha. Roberts was feeling the ill-effects of exposure to the climate, and hard work, and the doctors insisted on a trip to England. "On the 1st of April, the sixth anniversary of my arrival in India, I made over my office to Wolseley, who succeeded me as Deputy-Assistant Quartermaster-General on Hope Grant's staff, and towards the middle of the month I left Lucknow."

* General Sir Samuel Browne, V.C., G.C.M.

CHAPTER III

THE UMBEYLA AND ABYSSINIAN CAMPAIGNS

On the 4th of May, 1858, Roberts embarked at Calcutta in a P. and O. steamer, and on his arrival at Alexandria took another boat to Trieste. Thence he travelled home by Venice and Switzerland, arriving in England towards the end of June. After a brief stay in London the young soldier went to Waterford, where his parents were residing. "I found my father well and strong for a man of seventy-four, and to all appearance quite recovered from the effects of his fifty years of Indian service, and, to my great joy, my mother was looking almost as young, and quite as beautiful, as I had left her six years before." * Very proud was the veteran of the son who had returned home, having won the bronze cross "for valour." On the 22nd of August, 1858, Donald Stewart wrote to his wife: "Bobs you will find just the same as ever. He says his father brings out the standard for every visitor, and tells them the whole story of its capture by Bobs; and he then shows the pouch through which he was wounded, etc. etc. I can picture to myself the old gentleman when he is relating his son's adventures." The greater part of Roberts's leave was spent in Ireland, hunting during the winter months with the Curraghmore hounds. On the 17th of May, 1859, he was married to

* "My little sister, too, always an invalid, was very much as when I had parted from her—full of loving-kindness for everyone, and, though unable to move without help, perfectly happy in the many resources she had within herself and the good she was able to do in devoting those resources to the benefit of others."—"Forty-one Years in India," vol. i., p. 450.

GENERAL SIR ABRAHAM ROBERTS, G.C.B.
From a Painting in the possession of Lord Roberts

her "without whose loving help my *Forty-one Years in India* could not be the happy retrospect it is." While on his wedding tour in Scotland he received a command to be present on the 8th of June at Buckingham Palace. On that day the Queen presented to him the Victoria Cross, the first of many decorations which Her Majesty bestowed on her brave and faithful servant—but none more worthy of honour.

On the 30th of July, 1859, Major Roberts and his wife returned to India. In 1863 he was again employed on active service, in the Umbeyla Expedition. Early that year Brigadier-General Sir Neville Chamberlain was appointed to command a force of 9,000 men, collected for the purpose of punishing the fanatic Mohammedans from India who had formed a colony amidst the fastnesses of the outlying spurs of the Hindu Kush, whence they had spread seditious exhortations to all true Mohammedans to aid with money, arms, and prayers in an unrelenting war against unbelievers. To their strongholds of Sitana, Jadun, and Malka—in the Mahabun, or Mountains of the Great Forest—mutinous sepoys from India, Pathans, and Afridis flocked in numbers, all eager to join in raiding the lowland villages with the hope of gaining plunder or Paradise. When Sir Neville Chamberlain reached the Umbeyla Pass he was met by 15,000 of these fanatics; his force was hemmed in, and for three weeks the camp could only hold its own—the Punjab Government and the Government of India regarding the matter as so serious that they suggested a withdrawal of the whole force to the plains. Sir Hugh Rose, who was then Commander-in-Chief, very properly protested against any retirement, pointing out the danger of such a policy and the loss of prestige which would result. He promptly ordered larger forces to proceed to the frontier, and sent the late Sir John Adye and Roberts, who knew the people and language, to Chamberlain in order to hear his views, take a personal survey

of the country, and then return. On the 25th of November they reached Neville Chamberlain's camp. Having consulted the civil and military authorities on the spot, they informed the Commander-in-Chief that they were of opinion a withdrawal would be most unwise. On the 15th of December General Garvock, who, on account of Sir Neville Chamberlain having been severely wounded, had taken over the command, resumed the offensive by attacking the village of Laloo. A few hundred yards in front of it one of the great spurs running up from the Chumla Valley terminated, and a lofty peak dominated the whole ridge. The heights were crowned by several groups of clansmen arrayed under their different standards, and they had fortified the steep ascent by numerous sangars, or breastworks. The skirmishers, having driven in the outlying mountaineers, halted about 600 yards in front of the conical peak, and, supported by the mountain guns, waited for the arrival of the main body. After the several regiments had come up, and all was ready, General Garvock sounded the "advance." At that signal 5,000 men rose from their cover and, with loud cheers, rushed to the assault, the native regiments vying with the English soldiers as to who should first reach the enemy. Nothing could withstand the impetuosity of the assault, and in a few minutes the peak from foot to summit was in our possession.

"It was a grand sight," writes Lord Roberts, "as Adye and I watched it from Hughes's battery." The next morning the force again pushed on past Umbeyla and approached the hill leading to Buner. A body of *ghazis* who had been lying concealed in the ravines and broken ground rushed out sword in hand and wildly attacked the 23rd Pioneers. In a few seconds five of the British officers were on the ground, one killed and four wounded. A number of the men were laid low. The rest, staggered by the suddenness of the onslaught, fell

back on their reserve, "where they found the needed support, for the Fusiliers (7th Royal) stood as firm as a rock." Roberts, and Wright the Assistant-Adjutant-General, rushed in among the Pioneers, and having rallied them, led them against the *ghazis,* not a man of whom escaped.*

The next morning the tribes who had come long distances to join in the war disappeared from the scene, and the Buner chiefs came in to treat and make peace. It was arranged that they should accompany a small party of British officers to Malka, and that they themselves should set fire to the stronghold of the Hindustani fanatics. To Reynell Taylor, the political officer, of whom it was said by his comrades that he feared nothing on earth but God, the task was given of carrying out the operation. He was accompanied by six British officers: Colonel Adye, C.B., Colonel A. Taylor, R.E., Major Roberts, V.C., Major Wright, Major Johnston, and Lieutenant Carter. Twenty-five troopers and four companies of the Guides infantry under four officers formed the escort. On the afternoon of the 19th of December the party set out. The distance was only twenty-six miles, but owing to the severity of the weather and the long and toilsome march up the mountain, Malka was not reached till the evening of the 22nd. It proved to be a well-built village of wood, containing a rough gunpowder factory, and some few workshops. On the morning of the 22nd, Malka was set on fire, in the presence of a great concourse of neighbouring tribesmen, and the smoke of the burning village as it ascended high into the air proclaimed to the wild mountaineers that British power could not be abused and insulted with impunity. "The spectacle," writes Reynell Taylor, "of a tribe like the Buners doing our bidding and destroying the stronghold of their own allies in the war at a dis-

* "Life of Field-Marshal Sir Neville Chamberlain," by G. W. Forrest, C.I.E.

tant spot, with British witnesses looking on, must have been a thoroughly convincing proof to the surrounding country of the nature of our success, and of the indubitable character of the prostration felt by the tribe which had been the foremost at opposing us."

The Umbeyla campaign was over; the officers and their escort returned from Malka unopposed; the camp at the head of the pass was struck, and the force returned to British territory. On Christmas Day Roberts joined his wife at Peshawar. The Commander-in-Chief sent in his name for a brevet; "but the Viceroy refused to forward the recommendation, for the reason that I was 'too junior to be made a lieutenant-colonel.' I was then thirty-two."

Roberts returned to his duties in the Quartermaster-General's department, but owing to ill-health he was obliged to proceed in February, 1863, to England, and being given the command of a batch of 300 time-expired men, he sailed with them by the Cape route on board the *Renown*, one of Green's frigate-built ships, which was chartered for their conveyance. In the following March he returned to India, and was appointed Assistant-Quartermaster-General, Allahabad Division, and he held this post till he was appointed to the same office with the Bengal Brigade that was to proceed to Abyssinia under the command of Colonel Donald Stewart. In nominating him, the Commander-in-Chief, Sir William Mansfield, wrote on the 30th of September, 1867, to the Government of India: "Sir William Mansfield would recommend Major F. S. Roberts, V.C., and Assistant-Quartermaster-General, Allahabad Division, for the post. This officer is eminently qualified for the appointment by his activity and well-known military qualities, as well as by his experience in the Quartermaster-General's department in peace and war for nearly ten years."

During the Abyssinian expedition Major Roberts served as

senior staff-officer at Zula, the landing-place for the force in Annesley Bay, and earned the thanks of the Commander-in-Chief for the efficient manner in which he performed his duties: "His Excellency has received with pleasure most favourable reports regarding the able and energetic manner in which Major Roberts has carried on the duties of the department at Zula, and it has been a source of regret to the Commander-in-Chief that he has been unable to avail himself of Major Roberts's services in front." After Magdala was taken Sir Robert Napier showed his appreciation of Major Roberts's services by making him the bearer of his dispatches. On reaching London he took them to Sir Stafford Northcote, then Secretary of State for India, who, after reading them, asked him to take them without delay to the Commander-in-Chief.

"There was a dinner-party, however, that night at Gloucester House, and the servant told me it was quite impossible to disturb his Royal Highness; so, placing my card on the top of the dispatches, I told the man to deliver them at once, and went back to my club. I had scarcely reached it when the Duke's aide-de-camp made his appearance and told me that he had been ordered to find me and take me back with him. The Commander-in-Chief received me very kindly, expressing regret that I had been sent away in the first instance; and their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales, who were present, were most gracious, and asked many questions about the Abyssinian expedition."

Towards the end of February, 1869, Roberts, who had received the brevet rank of lieutenant-colonel for his services in the Abyssinian campaign, returned to Simla as First Assistant-Quartermaster at army headquarters, and two years later he was appointed senior staff-officer to the force who were going to punish the Lushais (one of the barbarous tribes that inhabit the large *enclave* of hilly country lying between Assam, Chitta-

gong, and Burma) for raiding our territory and spreading havoc among the outlying tea-gardens of Cachar. In November two columns, formed mostly of native troops, led by Generals Bourchier and Brownlow, set out from Cachar and Chittagong. Colonel Roberts, to whom had been entrusted the organisation and equipment of the expedition, accompanied General Bourchier, who had made his mark at the siege of Delhi. Notwithstanding the extreme heat of the climate and the difficult nature of the country, which was one succession of rolling hills covered with dense jungle and crowned with stockaded villages, the two columns slowly but steadily pushed their way. They cut roads through the jungles, beat the enemy, and captured their villages. In an expedition against one of the villages Roberts first had the independent command of a small column, and he showed with what skill, daring, and precision he could carry out the operations of war. On Christmas Day, 1871, Roberts and all the others assembled at headquarters mess and dined at "a table raised in a conspicuous position, with candles burning before them and Lushais firing from the jungle close by." By the end of February the expedition was brought to a successful close. To the great services rendered by his chief staff-officer the general bore testimony in his final dispatch: "Lieutenant-Colonel Roberts's untiring energy and sagacity are beyond all praise; working without guides, even without map and geography, thwarted by the Lushais, whose game was to delay our progress, he seemed never at a loss. But not only in his own department was it that he exerted himself. Whether piloting the advance-guard through the trackless forest or solving a commissariat or transport difficulty, his powerful aid was willingly given." For his services Colonel Roberts was awarded the Companionship of the Bath.

On the 31st of January, 1875, Lord Napier nominated Colonel Roberts to the coveted post of Quartermaster-General.

The next year he accompanied the Commander-in-Chief to Bombay, on the eve of his departure, and while he was bidding Lord Napier farewell, the *Orontes* steamed into the harbour with Lord Lytton on board. "Little did I imagine when making Lord Lytton's acquaintance how much he would have to say to my future career. His Excellency received me very kindly, telling me that he felt I was not altogether a stranger, as he had been reading during the voyage a paper I had written for Lord Napier a year or two before, on our military position in India and the arrangements that would be necessary in the event of Russia attempting to continue her advance south of the Oxus. Lord Napier had sent a copy of this memorandum to Lord Beaconsfield, by whom it had been given to Lord Lytton."

CHAPTER IV

THE SECOND AFGHAN WAR

FORTY years had passed since the time when General Sir Abraham Roberts had commanded a brigade during the first Afghan War, and the time was at hand when his son would be in command of an army in Afghanistan. During the interval, forces which it was impossible to curb had led us to annex the Punjab and cross the Indus, while like forces led the Russians to advance in the direction of the Oxus and the north-western province of Afghanistan. The continuous expansion of Russian dominion in Asia was naturally regarded with jealousy and disquietude by the ruler of Afghanistan, Shere Ali, who, after some years of hard fighting against his elder brothers, had firmly established himself on the throne which had been destined for him by his father, Dost Mohammed. As soon as he had decisively put down his enemies, Shere Ali proposed an interview with Lord Mayo, who had recently succeeded John Lawrence as Governor-General. On the 27th of March, 1869, the historic meeting between Lord Mayo and the Amir took place at Umballa with all the pomp and state of an Indian durbar. Lord Mayo had a difficult and delicate part to play. It was desirable to have the Amir as a friend, but it was impossible to grant him all he desired. He wanted a fixed annual salary; he wanted assistance in arms or in men to be given "not when the British Government might think fit to grant, but

when he might think it needful to solicit it." He desired a treaty "laying the British Government under an obligation to support the Afghan Government in any emergency; and not only that Government generally, but that Government as vested in himself and his direct descendants and no others."* Lord Mayo granted no treaty to Shere Ali. He told him "that under no circumstances shall a British soldier cross his frontier to assist him in coercing his rebellious subjects." In the place of a fixed subsidy or money allowance for any named period, he gave the Amir the second sum of £60,000, which Sir John Lawrence had promised him, together with an additional present of a heavy battery of artillery, a mountain train battery, and 10,000 stand of arms and accoutrements, which were of the utmost service to the Afghans when, only nine years later, we had to wage war against them.

Early in 1872 Lord Mayo's vigorous rule was tragically cut short by the assassin's knife in the Andaman Islands, where he had gone on a mission of mercy to alleviate the lot of the exiled criminal. His successor was Lord Northbrook, an able Whig administrator, endowed with the highest sense of duty. In 1873 Khiva fell, and the non-fulfilment of the Tsar's personal promise, that it should not be retained, made Shere Ali more apprehensive for the safety of his own dominions. A conference took place at Simla between the Viceroy and the Amir's envoy on the subject of a guarantee of his territory against foreign invasion. Lord Northbrook telegraphed home, and proposed to assure the envoy that the Government would help the Amir with money, arms and troops if necessary to repel any unprovoked aggression. But the Duke of Argyll, who was then Secretary of State for

* "The Administration of the Earl of Mayo as Viceroy and Governor-General of India," by Sir John Strachey, G.C.S.I.

India, entirely declined to sanction any such undertaking.* Lord Northbrook, not permitted to give any promise of substantial assistance, supplied the envoy with assurances and promises. But an Oriental ruler requires a precise pledge. The Amir wanted the British Government to state definitely that, in the event of any aggression on his territory, they would consider the aggressor an enemy. Lord Northbrook replied that the assurance given was sufficient.

From the moment when the Amir found that, though the British Government professed to desire his friendship, they were too cautious to offer any definite price for it whatever, he ceased to be a friend and became an enemy. The Amir had been told to dismiss the contingency of Russian aggression from his mind as too remote. But the Amir, who was well acquainted with current events in Central Asia, knew that there was substantial ground for alarm. He did not attach undue value to "the positive assurance" of the Russian Foreign Office that "his Imperial Majesty looked upon Afghanistan as completely outside the sphere within which Russia might be called upon to exercise her influence." The progress of events soon justified the Amir. In the autumn of 1874 the Ambassador at St. Petersburg reported that the whole of the country between Khiva and the Atrek was regarded as annexed to Russia, and in 1875 the whole of Khokand was incorporated in the Russian dominion. At the same time, General Kaufmann, the ambitious Governor-General of Turkestan, entered into frequent communications with Shere Ali. The Commissioner at Peshawar reported that, as soon as one Russian agent was preparing to take his departure, another appeared. The British Government did not call Russia to account, nor the Government of India

* "Lord Lytton's Indian Administration," by Lady Betty Balfour, p. 14; also "Autobiography of Sir T. Douglas Forsyth," 1887.

the Amir. But Mr. Disraeli, who had succeeded Mr. Gladstone as Prime Minister in March, 1874, and Lord Salisbury, who held the office of Secretary of State for India, both considered that the time had come to reconsider our relations with the ruler of Afghanistan. In September, 1875, Lord Northbrook requested to be relieved of his office in the following spring, and on the 23rd of November Mr. Disraeli wrote to Lord Lytton, then Minister of Legation at Lisbon: "If you be willing, I will submit your name to the Queen as his successor. The critical state of affairs in Central Asia demands a statesman, and I believe if you will accept this high post you will have an opportunity, not only of serving your country, but of obtaining an enduring fame." Lord Lytton had, at Vienna, Belgrade and Paris, been trained in the diplomatic art, and Mr. Disraeli knew that a man so fascinating and brilliant was also a strenuous worker and an able negotiator.

Lord Lytton, after some hesitation, owing to the condition of his health, accepted the great imperial appointment. He was instructed to offer to Afghanistan "the same active countenance and protection which he had previously tolerated at the hands of the Indian Government." This was only to be done, however, on the condition that Shere Ali was prepared to allow a British agent, or agents, access to positions on his territory (other than to Kabul itself) where, without prejudicing the personal authority of the ruler, they would require information, trustworthy information, of events likely to threaten the tranquillity or independence of Afghanistan.*

Lord Lytton, on assuming the office of Governor-General of India (April 12th, 1876), at once took measures for carrying out his instructions. His first step was to propose sending

* "Life of Field-Marshal Sir Neville Chamberlain," by G. W. Forrest, C.I.E., p. 468.

a message of compliment and courtesy to Kabul, but this overture was declined by the Amir, whose mood was sullen and resentful. After several months had passed the Amir consented to enter into negotiations, and in January, 1877, a meeting took place at Peshawar between Sir Lewis Pelly, as representative of the Viceroy, and the Afghan envoy. After much fencing, the envoy rejected the *sine qua non* condition, that a British agent should reside at Herat or other parts of the frontier of Afghanistan. The death of the envoy in March, 1877, put an end to the Peshawar conference, and left the relations between the Amir and the Indian Government much more strained than before.

A month after Lord Lytton had closed negotiations with the Amir, war was declared (April, 1877) by Russia against Turkey; and in January, 1878, the Russian army fought its way with great loss across the Balkans and encamped within the zone of Constantinople. At the beginning of March a treaty of peace was made, and it seemed as if Russia's undying scheme and ambition, the possession of the Imperial City of Constantinople, was about to be realised. "The invasion of India is a threat," said Fenwick Williams, the gallant defender of Kars, to me, "but the possession of Constantinople is a religion, and Russia is like the Almighty —a thousand years in her sight is but a day." On the 3rd of March a treaty, dictated to the Sultan, was signed at San Stefano within sight of the dome of St. Sophia. But Russia had now to reckon with the hostility of the great powers of Europe. The British fleet was sent to the Dardanelles, seven thousand native troops were brought from India to Malta, and the two nations were on the very brink of war. The British Government brought native troops to Europe as a demonstration against Russia, and Russia retaliated by despatching a mission from Tashkend to Kabul with proposals

for an alliance with the Amir. Shere Ali viewed the approach of the mission with alarm and displeasure, and he wrote to General Kaufmann, the Governor-General at Tashkend, to postpone the mission; but the Governor-General replied "that the ambassador had already been despatched from St. Petersburg with the Tsar's instructions, which could not now be recalled, that he was far advanced on his way to Kabul, and that the Amir would be held responsible, not only for his safety, but his honourable reception, within Afghan territory." * On the 28th of July the Russian embassy entered Kabul and received an "honourable reception." As soon as the news of the arrival of the Russian envoy at the Amir's court reached India, it was determined to send an English mission to Kabul under the charge of Sir Neville Chamberlain, "an able, resolute man, of exceptional experience in all frontier matters," † who was personally acquainted with the Amir. On the 12th of September the British Mission assembled at Peshawar, and, after some fruitless negotiation, it moved on the 21st of September to Jamrood, three miles from the mouth of the Khyber Pass, but within our own territory, and encamped there. Major Cavagnari, an able and brave soldier who had wandered among the mountains without an escort, and knew thoroughly the tribesmen and their subtle, treacherous nature, accompanied by Lieutenant-Colonel Jenkins, Captain W. Battye, and a few troops, rode on to within a mile of Ali Musjid. Here they were met by the Afghan commander. He was most courteous and most firm, but no arguments could move him. "He was only a sentry, and had no regular troops but only a few levies, but that such as his orders were, he would carry them out to the

* "Lord Lytton's Indian Administration," by Lady Betty Balfour, p. 248.

† Lord Lytton to Viscount Cranbrook, August 3rd, 1878, in "Lord Lytton's Indian Administration," by Lady Betty Balfour, p. 259.

best of his ability, and that unless he received orders from Kabul he could not let the Mission pass his post." Major Cavagnari and his party at once rejoined the camp at Jamrood, and the Mission returned to Peshawar. The Viceroy considered that this was an injury which we were pledged to avenge promptly, but it was only after some demur that the Government at home consented to an ultimatum being sent on November 2nd. The Amir was informed that, in the event of no answer, or an unfavourable answer, being received not later than November 20th, he would be treated as the declared enemy of the British Government.

Before this time three columns had been mobilised in order to enforce by arms what the British Government could not obtain by negotiation. The Kandahar Field Force, concentrated at Sukkur under Lieutenant-General Donald Stewart, was to reinforce Quetta and occupy Kandahar. The Peshawar Valley Field Force, under the command of Lieutenant-General Sir Samuel Browne, was to gain possession of the Khyber Pass, capture its stronghold, Ali Musjid, and eventually occupy Jellalabad. The Kuram* Valley Column, concentrated at Kohat and Thal, our farthest frontier post, was to take possession of the Kuram Valley, as also of Khost. On the 22nd of October, 1878, Major-General Frederick Roberts, on account of the ability he had shown as Quartermaster-General, was appointed to command the column. To take a man from the desk to command an army in the field is a hazardous experiment, but in this case it was fully justified by the record of the officer. He had enjoyed varied experiences in the field, and won three medals, the Companionship of the Bath, and the Victoria Cross, and had been mentioned twenty-three times in despatches.

* It is spelt "Kuram" by Lord Roberts, and "Kurram" in the "Official History."

As soon as General Roberts heard of the repulse of the Mission, knowing that he was to have command of the Kuram Force, he left Simla and arrived at Kohat on the 9th of October. He proceeded at once with an energy incarnate and a knowledge thorough to supervise the organisation of the force assembling there and at Thal. His first care was to have a hospital formed at Kohat. Every detail of the complex problem of transport was carefully thought out. A certain portion of the transport he placed in regimental charge. "I had the men instructed in loading and unloading, and I took great care that the animals were not overladen." A main depot of supply was established, and an entrenched post was constructed at Thal. Materials for a trestle bridge were collected there, and on the 18th, having reconnoitred the river, he selected a site for it. By the evening of the 20th the bridge was in its place across the Kuram River.

On that day, as the Amir had not made any reply to the ultimatum, orders were issued to the three generals to cross the frontier and advance at daybreak the following morning. At 5 A.M. on the 21st of November General Roberts and the leading troops crossed the Kuram River, and made their first advance into Afghan territory by entering the lower Kuram Valley, about sixty miles long and three to ten miles broad. "On every side rose high and magnificent wooded mountains, those on the north and east being the most lofty and precipitous, while on the north-west projects the spur which runs from Sika Ram, the highest peak of the Safed Koh range, upwards of 14,000 feet high. This spur forms the boundary between Kuram and Afghanistan, and is crossed by the Peiwar Kotal." On the 25th the force marched through the Darwazia defile to Kuram Fort. As no trustworthy information could be obtained regarding the position of the enemy, General Roberts and staff, escorted

by the 12th Bengal Cavalry, reconnoitred towards the Afghan cantonment of Habib Kala, fifteen miles ahead, and discovered that the Amir's troops, consisting (it was said) of about 18,000 infantry and six mountain batteries and five field guns had just retired and were seen retreating over the Kotal, or pass over the Peiwar ridge.* On the 28th, before dawn, a garrison having been left at the Kuram Fort and all weak and sickly men weeded out, the force continued its advance. On arrival at Habib Kala the general was informed that the Amir's troops had abandoned their guns at the foot of the Peiwar Kotal, and that they were in disorderly retreat.† A reconnaissance in force, under the command of Colonel John Gordon, of the 29th Punjab Infantry, showed, however, that the enemy were well provided with artillery, and that their position, concealed by a high range of pine-clad hills and precipitous cliffs, was almost impregnable in front—a position strong by nature having been made more strong by felled pine-trees and breastworks. Even if a frontal attack proved successful, it would entail a heavy loss of life. General Roberts therefore determined to turn the position by a flank movement, and by his order a thorough reconnaissance of the different spurs which led from the Peiwar Kotal into the plain below was made, and those on the right and left of the camp carefully examined. Major Collett, Assistant Quartermaster-General to the division, and Captain Carr, Deputy-Assistant Quartermaster-General of Cavalry, having carefully reconnoitred the approaches to the Spingawai‡ Pass, which crosses the ridge about one mile and a half north of the Peiwar, reported so

* "Forty-one Years in India," vol. ii., pp. 130 and 131; "The Second Afghan War, Official Account," p. 98.

† "The Second Afghan War, Official Account," p. 100.

‡ It is spelt "Spingawi" by Lord Roberts, and "Spingawai" in the "Official History."

favourably on the route that Roberts determined to make his chief attack on that point, and so turn the enemy's left.

On Sunday morning, December 1, church parade was held, "just a little out of range of the enemy's artillery. I think nearly every officer present partook of the Sacrament afterwards. It was a most solemn and impressive service." At 10 P.M., with a small force of only 1,263 men, of whom only a few hundred were Europeans, Lord Roberts set forth to make his turning movement and surprise the enemy on the Peiwar ridge. Brigadier-General Cobbe, with a little more than 1,000 men, was to remain in camp "with instructions to advance at 6 A.M. on the 2nd of December, so as to be in position to storm the Peiwar when the enemy's left flank had been sufficiently shaken." * Tents were left standing and camp-fires burning, and the preparations had been made with so much secrecy and carried out with so little noise that only a very few who were in the secret knew of the column's departure. Roberts led his men along a rough track, which ran due north for two miles, and then turned sharp to the east, entered a wide gorge, and ran along the bed of a mountain stream covered by huge boulders over which the men had to pick their way. Moonlight had been followed by pitch darkness, and a cutting wind swept down the gorge. On they toiled. Strict commands had been given that not a word should be spoken. Everything depended on silence and secrecy. About 2 A.M. the stillness was broken by the sound of two shots. They were fired by two men of the Pathan company of the 29th Punjab Native Infantry. Roberts wrote at the time:

"The position was an extremely anxious one; it was impossible to say how far we were from Spingawi Kotal, or whether the shots could be heard by the enemy; it was also

* "Official History of the Second Afghan War," p. 105.

impossible to ascertain who had fired the shots, without delaying the advance, and this I was loth to do in the uncertainty as to the distance still to be traversed. Unwilling as I was to take any step which could discredit a regiment bearing so high a character as the 29th, I felt that our enterprise had been already imperilled by the conduct of the Pathans, and that the occasion was not one for hesitation, for unless we could reach the Spingawi while it was still dark, the turning movement, instead of being a success, would in all probability have ended in a disaster." *

The 29th had been leading, but Lord Roberts now ordered that their place should be taken by the 5th Gurkhas and a company of the 72nd Highlanders. They pushed on in darkness until they entered the woods, and the climb began to grow steeper. Lord Roberts knew they must be nearing the final ascent, and he "now told Major FitzHugh, commanding the 5th Gurkhas, that I should give him no further orders, but that he was to move on rapidly, and on reaching the foot of the Afghan position he was to give the order: 'Front form companies,' and go at the enemy as hard as he could, and I promised to support him with the 72nd Highlanders and other regiments as fast as I could bring them into action. At the first streak of dawn I heard the order: 'Front form companies,' and a few seconds after the enemy began firing." The faint light of dawn did not penetrate the dark pine wood, and the Gurkhas slowly felt their way until a shot rang out. It was a sentry in front of a strong sangar or breastwork. The Gurkhas, led by Major FitzHugh and Captain J. Cook, rushed forward, a volley at the closest range blazed out in the face of them, but on they went, and after a brief tussle the breastwork was taken. Many a brave Afghan fell fighting at his post. Eighty yards in

* "Forty-one Years in India," vol. ii., p. 139.

the rear was another sangar. The Gurkhas and one company of the Highlanders, who had hurried forward at the first sound of firing, outflanked it, and the enemy speedily fell back on a third sangar. The three remaining companies of the Highlanders having pushed their way through the dense wood, now joined the Gurkhas, and the two, moving impetuously forward up the zig-zag track, stormed and captured, after a severe struggle, the third stockade, which commanded the head of the pass. The Spingawai Pass was won; but high above the stockade was a knoll on which the Afghans were strongly posted and hidden from view. They swarmed in the surrounding woods. The 72nd Highlanders, accompanied by Roberts and his staff on foot, climbed up the steep side and drove the enemy from the knoll. Roberts now ordered Captain Kelso to bring up one of his two mountain guns. He had pushed them forward in spite of the difficulties of the ground, and brought them into action in the battery deserted by the Afghans, and worked them with good effect. On receipt of the order, Kelso, issuing from the battery, was shot through the head, "the mule carrying the wheels of the gun-carriage broke away and was never seen again; the mule with the spare wheels could not be found, and the gun was disabled for the rest of the day." Twice did the Afghans make an attempt to retake the knoll. They rushed out of the woods and charged the native troops dispersed on account of the broken ground. Galbraith, the Assistant Adjutant-General, collecting a few men, greeted them by a volley. They stopped, but in another minute Galbraith would have been a dead man if Captain J. Cook had not put himself at the head of a few men, and driven back the assailants at the point of the bayonet.*

* For this act of gallantry Captain J. Cook was awarded the Victoria Cross.

The Spingawai had been won and secured, but the Peiwar Kotal remained to be reached and taken. The Afghans must not be allowed to recover their defeat. But the 2nd Punjab Infantry, the 23rd Pioneers and the Elephant Battery were still far behind. Roberts determined to press forward with the troops he had with him. After a short interval of rest, and ammunition pouches having been refilled, the little force started again, the 29th Punjab Infantry leading and the three mountain-guns, now under the command of Lieutenant Sherries,* bringing up the rear. On leaving the Spingawai Plateau where the commander had formed a field hospital and placed a guard to protect it, they began to ascend. Through the dense forest, through tangled brushwood, over rock and stones, over felled trees, Roberts and the men of the 29th made their way. Two hours' stiff climb and the summit was reached. Then Roberts saw below him a deep hollow, and opposite, about one hundred and fifty yards away, rose another hill, from whose pine-clad sides came a smiting fire. He found that he and his staff were alone with the 29th Punjab Infantry. The Highlanders, the Gurkhas, and the Mountain Battery had not arrived. A desperate position. Retreat was impossible without ruin. But Roberts's equanimity was not disturbed.† Calm as if on parade he sent one of his staff officers to find the missing troops. Minute after minute passed by, but no

* In "Forty-one Years," "Sherries"; in the "Official History," "Lieutenant T. C. Shirrees."

† "Many men would have withdrawn instantly from a position fraught with such great and pressing danger, but Roberts's indomitable courage and resolution saved him from what would have been a fatal error, for a backward movement on his part must have drawn the enemy after him and shown them the possibility of destroying, singly, the scattered members of his force. With imperturbable sang-froid he stuck to the summit of the hill, and had he had an army corps at his back instead of a single regiment, one-half of which was in a state of incipient mutiny, he could not have shown a bolder front to friend and foe."—"The Second Afghan War," by Colonel H. B. Hanna, vol. ii., p. 80.

sign of them. He sent another staff officer in search of them. The fire of the enemy grew every moment warmer and warmer. No sign of the missing division. Then Roberts sent Adams, the Chaplain of the Force, who had begged to be allowed to accompany him that day as aide-de-camp. Some fifteen or twenty minutes passed: Adams returned with no news of them. Roberts sent him in another direction. The bullets now whistled around them. The Afghans were growing bolder and bolder. At any moment they might cross the hollow and rush the hill. Roberts then spoke to the 29th a few words, telling them that the opportunity had come for them to retrieve the disgrace they had incurred during the night. Captain G. N. Channer,* the officer who was just then in command, instantly answered for the loyalty of the Sikh companies, but the Pathan companies stood silent and sullen. "I therefore ordered," says Lord Roberts, "Channer and his subaltern, Picot, to advance cautiously down the slope with the Sikhs of the regiment, following myself near enough to keep the party in sight. I had not gone far, however, before I found that the enemy were much too strongly placed to be attacked successfully by so few men; accordingly I recalled Channer, and we returned to the position at the top of the hill." † Here he found Adams, who brought him the glad tidings that he had discovered not only the Gurkhas, Highlanders and mountain guns, but also the 2nd Punjab Infantry and the 23rd Pioneers. The elephants with the Horse Artillery were close behind.

* Major-General Channer, V.C., C.B.

† "My orderlies during this little episode displayed such touching devotion that it is with feelings of the most profound admiration and gratitude I call to mind their self-sacrificing courage. On this (as on many other occasions) they kept close round me, determined that no shot should reach me if they could prevent it; and on my being hit in the hand by a spent bullet, and turning to look round in the direction it came from, I beheld one of the Sikhs standing with his arms stretched out, trying to screen me from the enemy, which he could easily do, for he was a grand specimen of a man, a head and shoulders taller than myself."—"Forty-one Years in India," vol. ii., p. 143.

The 72nd Highlanders on arriving soon became engaged with the enemy on the left, who were posted in deep gullies with precipitous sides. To take them was impossible.* On the right there was a narrow causeway which the Afghans had barricaded. "The 2nd Punjab Infantry and 23rd Pioneers made gallant efforts to dislodge the enemy on the right, and as far as the difficulties of the ground permitted they were successful, though not without incurring heavy loss, amongst which was Major A. D. Anderson, of the last-named regiment, who fell while gallantly defending himself at close quarters; a havildar and a sepoy of his regiment sharing his fate in their brave endeavours to recover his body." †

About noon the four guns of the Horse Artillery (on elephants), escorted by two companies of the 23rd Pioneers, arrived under Colonel W. Sterling. They soon came into action and shelled the dense woods in which the Afghans' left lay concealed. "Three guns of No. 1 Mountain Battery also worked their way to the front with great difficulty on the densely wooded hill, where the infantry were hotly engaged with the enemy, and shelled the latter with apparently good effect." ‡ But they did not remain long in that position. Colonel McQueen, with the 5th Punjab Infantry, and Colonel Perkins, the Commanding Engineer, having lost touch with Cobbe's Infantry, who were making the frontal attack, pushed on to join Roberts.§ As McQueen was mounting up the last ascent he caught through a narrow opening in the pine wood a glimpse of the Afghan camp. On reaching Roberts, Colonel Perkins informed him that there was a commanding spot from which the entire position of the Afghans at the Peiwar Kotal could be shelled. The General at once ordered Lieutenant Sherries

* "Official History of the Second Afghan War," p. 109.
† *Ibid.*, pp. 109-110. ‡ *Ibid.*, p. 110.
§ "Forty-one Years in India," vol. ii., p. 146.

to take his mountain battery there, and soon his shells were bursting in the Afghan camp. Roberts and his staff had crossed the neck of land connecting the two hills, and pushed a little way up the opposite slope through the close-growing trees and matted undergrowth. The wood was full of Afghans, and it was impossible to discover what stout breastwork they had erected. Roberts saw that the mountain was practically inaccessible, and he determined to make another turning movement. He asked Colonel Perkins to return and tell Colonel Drew, who was now conducting the frontal attack, to press on to the Peiwar Kotal. Roberts hoped that the shelling of their camp by the mountain guns and his turning movement would cause the enemy to retreat. The anticipation proved correct.

At 6 A.M., on December 2nd, General Cobbe moved out of camp with his two infantry regiments, the 8th King's and 5th Punjab Infantry, and took up a position on the right in front of the guns. After an artillery duel, which lasted three hours, two of the enemy's guns situated on the summit of the pass were silenced. Meanwhile Cobbe received a signal from Roberts to make a further advance and co-operate with him. "Thereupon a ridge, 350 yards nearer the enemy's position, was rapidly secured by two companies of the 28th Foot under Lieutenant-Colonel E. Tanner and by the 5th Punjab Infantry under Major McQueen." * The infantry pushed on and up from ridge to ridge until the 8th King's reached a point not more than 1,400 yards from the top of the pass. They halted and opened a rifle fire on the Kotal and on the masses of the enemy on the opposite side of the ravine. The Afghans vigorously replied. The drum-major and two sergeants were killed: several men were wounded. Brigadier-General Cobbe was struck by a bullet on the thigh and was obliged to resign the

* "Official History of the Second Afghan War," p. 108.

command of the 1st Brigade to Colonel F. Barry Drew of the 28th Foot. Drew found himself in a critical position. "The 5th Punjab Infantry had worked away we knew not whither, and we began to think we should really have to storm the Kotal with the weak battalion of the King's." Drew had with him only five companies, but he led forward his gallant youngsters, and after toilsome climbing they gained a crest within 800 yards of the guns on the Kotal, and with their Martini-Henry rifles they picked off the gunners. The Afghans stood staunchly to their guns, and many were killed before they abandoned them. The defenders of the Peiwar Kotal, finding themselves between the fire of Drew's rifles and the mountain guns, began to move from the Kotal, but on discovering their rear compromised by Roberts's second turning movement their retirement became a panic-stricken flight. Drew now decided to advance against the Kotal. He directed the guns under Major Parry, R.H.A., supported by the 12th Bengal Cavalry, under Colonel Hugh Gough, V.C., to move forward to a better position for covering the advance of the infantry.* Gough, on observing that the infantry fire of the enemy was gradually ceasing, and that bodies of Afghans could no longer be seen on the summit of the hill waving their banners and shouting defiance, decided that the enemy were deserting the Kotal. Accompanied by Lieutenant Brabazon of the 10th Hussars and his native cavalry officer, Gough rode on to the foot of the pathway leading up to the Kotal. "Whilst I was cogitating what had best be our next move, 'Swish! Swish!' went a volley of bullets all round us, showing there were still some foes at hand." Gough now desired Brabazon to return and tell the officer commanding the two companies of the 8th which had moved up the pass that the road was now clear and to suggest a further advance. Gough was now joined by Colonel Water-

* "Official History of the Second Afghan War," p. 112.

field, the Political Officer, and when Brabazon returned they decided to ascend to the Kotal. Dismounting and leading their horses, they, after a stiff climb, reached the top of the pass.

"Arrived at the summit we found the entire camp abandoned—eighteen guns in position, helmets, accoutrements, supplies, ammunition, everything left. All was silent; not a sign of friend or foe except in the dead and wounded lying about. The far-famed Kotal was ours! But who had done the fighting? *We* certainly had not driven them from such a position, so we could only conjecture that Roberts's flank attack had defeated the enemy, who, threatened on one side and attacked on the other, had fled in such haste that everything was left behind them." * The 8th King's now came up, and at 2.30 P.M. the Peiwar Kotal was in possession of the troops and the enemy in full flight along the Ali Khel road. They fled as soon as they heard of Roberts's second turning movement, and it was this flanking movement that won the day.† But the flight had been so instant and swift that it was impossible for the turning forces to get up in time to cut off their retreat. At the time when the enemy deserted the Kotal the turning force was slowly making its way through blind thickets. This consumed much time, and it was four o'clock before the force emerged on the southern slopes of the Sika Ram mountain. The short December day was fast drawing to a close. In the fading light the general saw through his telescope "a large body of Afghans moving towards the Shutargardan, which made me feel quite satisfied that the enemy's position was in our possession." There was now no special

* "Old Memories," by Sir Hugh Gough, *Pall Mall Magazine*, vol. xvii., p. 48.

† "There is not a doubt that Roberts's attack by the Spingawai was the only solution of the difficult problem he had to solve, and his further flanking movement won the day."—*Ibid.*, p. 50.

need of pushing forward. Darkness was falling on the face of the mountains and the troops were worn out, marching all night and fighting all day without food, and the general gave the order to bivouac. Pine trees were soon cut down, large fires threw their broad lights on the dark wood, and the men sat round them trying to warm themselves. About 8 P.M. General Roberts's surmise that the enemy had abandoned their strong position was confirmed. A messenger who made his way across the mountains brought a pencilled note from Colonel Waterfield, stating that the Peiwar Kotal was in the possession of the troops. The victorious soldiers settled down for the night. "It was hardly a pleasant experience, lying on the ground, without even cloaks, at an elevation of 9,000 feet, and with the thermometer marking twenty degrees of frost; but spite of cold and hunger, thoroughly content with the day's work and with my mind at rest, I slept as soundly as I had ever done in the most luxurious quarters, and I think the others did the same." Roberts had every reason to be thoroughly content with the day's work. At Peiwar Kotal he first gave a signal illustration of that intuitive perception which distinguishes the greatest generals. He saw that the Kotal must be captured: a front attack might lead to disaster, it certainly must lead to heavy loss of life: he made the most thorough reconnaissance of the country, and by intuition he decided on the best course to follow. In following it he took the legitimate risk which every general must take who wishes to win a complete victory.

The next morning General Roberts continued his march and joined the remainder of the Peiwar Field Force at the Kotal. He telegraphed that day: "The turning movement by the Spingawi Pass during night of 1st was most successful. The road was extremely difficult and the distance longer than was expected. We reached the enemy just at daybreak and

took them completely by surprise. The 72nd Highlanders and the 5th Gurkhas drove them successively from their several positions, both regiments vying with each other. The turning party then tried to reach the Peiwar Kotal, but owing to the difficulties of the ground and the densely wooded hilltops, the assault of the Kotal could not be delivered from that side. I therefore decided to withdraw the troops from this line, to place the column so as to threaten the enemy's rear, and to attack the Kotal this morning. This movement, aided by the efficient work of the 8th Foot and 5th Punjab Infantry, from the direction of our camp, under General Cobbe, had the desired effect of driving the enemy from the Kotal, which our troops occupied about 4 P.M. yesterday." Roberts halted at the Kotal for four days to enable his men to recover from the fatigues they had undergone and to arrange for the occupation of the position, so splendidly won, for the winter. On the 4th of December he issued a Division Order thanking the troops for their unwearying endeavour and gallantry:

"Major-General Roberts congratulates the Kuram Field Force on the successful result of the operations of the 2nd December against the Peiwar Kotal, a position of extraordinary strength, and held by an enemy resolute and well armed.

"Not only had the enemy the advantage of ground, but also of numbers, as they were largely reinforced from Kabul the evening previous to the attack.

"A position apparently impregnable has been gained, a considerable portion of the Afghan Army has been completely routed, and eighteen guns, with large stores of ammunition and supplies, have been captured. This result is most honourable, and could only have been achieved by troops in a high state of discipline, capable of enduring great fatigue, and able to fight as soldiers of the British Army have always fought.

"Major-General Roberts deeply regrets the brave men who have fallen in the gallant discharge of their duty, and feels much for the sufferings of the wounded. In Major Anderson, 23rd Pioneers, and Captain Kelso, Royal Artillery, the Major-General has lost two personal friends, and the Government two valuable officers."

General Roberts also communicated to the troops the following congratulatory message from the Queen: "I have received the news of the decisive victory of General Roberts, and the splendid behaviour of my brave soldiers, with pride and satisfaction, though I must ever deplore the unavoidable loss of life. Pray inquire after the wounded in my name. May we continue to receive good news."

On the 6th of December, the sick and wounded having been sent to Kuram, and arrangements completed for holding the Kotal, Roberts advanced with the main body of the force to reconnoitre the Shutargardan Pass, whose summit is distant from Kabul only a little more than fifty miles. It was necessary to discover what obstacles the pass presented to a force marching from the Kuram Valley on to Kabul. The first day the force marched twelve miles to Ali Khel, a small village with camping ground on an elevated plateau. On the 7th Roberts, with an escort of two hundred and fifty Highlanders and two hundred and fifty Gurkhas and two guns, made a short march "almost entirely through a pass, the only track being, as usual, the dry or frozen bed of a stream, with a dense forest all around,"* and encamped at Rokian, three and a half miles west of Ali Khel. The next morning they proceeded through the Hazar Darakht defile to Jaji Thana, "about thirteen miles farther on, passing through a veritable wilderness, almost the whole line of our advance being in darkness from the density of the

* "Old Memories," by Sir Hugh Gough, *Pall Mall Magazine*, vol. xvii., p. 202.

forest." At 9 A.M. on the 9th, a bitterly cold morning, with a cutting wind sweeping down the narrow gorges, the reconnoitring party, leaving their camp standing, crossed the Surkai Kotal and descended to a broad plateau, which brought them to the foot of the hill leading to the Shutargardan, or Camel's Neck Pass. "Here we left the 72nd and 5th Gurkhas, and the general, accompanied by a few officers and an escort of Ghilzais, commenced the ascent, which we found to be an easy and graceful incline of about two and a half miles, the Kotal being exactly 11,000 feet high. The road was by no means bad, and after about three-quarters of an hour's climbing we were at the top, and overlooking the Logar Valley, one of the most fertile in Kabul."* A misty haze hid Ghazni and Kabul from view. Having surveyed the scene, the party returned safely to the escort and bade farewell to the Ghilzais. "Some of us had thought it venturesome of the general placing himself so unreservedly in the hands of these men, the warlike inhabitants of the region about, who, though now professing themselves as most friendly, were, we knew, noted for their treachery."

On the 9th of December General Roberts telegraphed: "I finished the reconnaissance to the top of the Shutargardan to-day. The cold is great, and the troops are somewhat fatigued, but it seemed very important to go that far and complete the defeat of the 2nd instant. The onward movement has reassured the Jajis, and the Ghilzais see that we are determined to enter Kabul proper if necessary. The Ghilzais were exceedingly civil, and I hope that some of their headmen will soon join me. The Shutargardan is not a position likely to be defended. The summit of the Kotal proves to be only 11,200 feet instead of over 13,000 feet. The road is easier than was expected, and presents no great difficulties for guns. On

* "Old Memories," by Sir Hugh Gough, *Pall Mall Magazine*, vol. xvii.

the other side of the Kotal we found six field-gun carriages and four limbers; the guns had recently been carried off. There is a fine view of the Logar Valley from the Kotal."

On the 10th of December the column returned to Ali Khel, and Roberts, "ever alert and keen in reconnaissance,"* determined to return to Kuram by another route, for it was of the highest importance to obtain a knowledge of an alternative line of communication. On the 12th of December the Headquarters Staff and General Roberts marched by the new route for Kuram with No. 1 Mountain Battery, a wing of the 72nd, the 5th Gurkhas, and the 23rd Pioneers. That evening they reached an open grassy plateau, on which stood the hamlet of Sapari, near which the general encamped, having sent on the Pioneers to secure the summit of the pass overlooking the defile between Sapari and Karaia, the next halting place on the Kuram River. At 2 A.M. next morning Roberts started, so as to make sure of clearing the pass before dark, however long and difficult it might prove. "The carriage consisted of mules and camels, chiefly the former; the mules I sent off first, and arrived on the Kotal myself just as the last of them had crossed and as the first of the camels was reaching the ascent." The path being steep, rugged and very slippery, owing to its being overflowed by a mountain stream which had frozen, the progress of the camels was slow. It was nearly 11 A.M. when the last of them got over the Kotal. The descent of the pass was scarcely less difficult for the camels than the ascent. They "dropped 3,000 feet in the first two miles, down a way which can only be described as a ruined staircase with the steps missing at intervals."† The gorge at the foot of the hill extended for five miles; the track, a rough and stony watercourse, "for the first part ran through a deep ravine with perpendicular

* "Old Memories," by Sir Hugh Gough, *Pall Mall Magazine*, vol. xvii., p. 202.

† "Forty-one Years in India," vol. ii., p. 152.

walls, which narrowed in places to but a few yards, overhanging the path till they seemed to meet and made a gateway or tunnel through which the road passed." Four companies of the Pioneers formed the advance guard, two more were distributed among the mules, and the remaining two followed them. As they made their way through the narrow defile "not a sign of hostility was apparent. Small groups of tribesmen were perched here and there on the rocks, and some were even squatted by the wayside, regarding our movements in a perfectly unconcerned manner." When they had got three-fourths of the way through the defile unmolested, Roberts ordered the six companies of the Pioneers to push on in charge of the mules which carried the tents, kits and ammunition. It had been impossible to move flanking parties along the cliffs above, as there were chasms running back for long distances,* so he ordered two companies of the Pioneers to crown "the first height that could be crowned, with orders not to come down till the rearguard had passed." Not the sound of a shot had been heard. It was then considerably past noon; the winter day was short, and, when the gorge began to widen, Roberts, wishing to see the Mountain Battery clear of the defile before dark, ordered it to be brought on in charge of the four companies of the 72nd Highlanders, leaving the usual baggage guards of that regiment with their camels.† "We had barely reached camp," says Sir Hugh Gough, "when the alarm was raised that the Munguls had attacked the baggage and rearguard, consisting of the 5th Gurkhas. Heavy firing was heard, and reinforcements were at once sent back." The services of the 72nd Highlanders and 23rd Pioneers were, however, not required. The end of the column had been followed by the enemy, and for some hours FitzHugh "and his

* "Forty-one Years in India," vol. ii., p. 152.

† Letter from General Roberts, Kuram, March 7th, 1879.

noble little Gurkhas" maintained a stiff rearguard fight with a bold and active enemy sheltered behind every rock and rising ground. Captain Goad, Transport Officer, was shot through both legs. He would have fallen into the hands of the enemy if Sergeant Greer,* of the 72nd Highlanders, and three privates had not placed him under the cover of a rock. The wild fanatics pressed on them from all sides, but these four brave soldiers, by their steady fire, kept them off until help arrived and the wounded officer was carried away. At last the rocky defile was passed, and black night had fallen when FitzHugh and the Gurkhas reached camp. Not one baggage animal or one article of baggage fell into the hands of the enemy. Besides Goad mortally wounded, Captain C. F. Powell and three Gurkhas were killed, and eleven were wounded (one mortally).†

On the 14th of December General Roberts and Staff went on to Kuram. Two days later the following appeared in Division Orders:

"No. 349.—1. Major-General Roberts desires to place on record his appreciation of the excellent behaviour of the 5th Gurkhas when attacked in the Sapari valley on the 13th December.

"2. The regiment was on rear guard, and was charged with the protection of a long baggage column, when passing through the most difficult defile the Major-General has ever seen.

"3. This duty was performed with great gallantry and steadiness, and the 5th Gurkhas have given an example to

* "I had observed in the advance on the Peiwar Kotal the skill and gallantry displayed by Sergeant Greer, and noted him as a man fitted for promotion. His distinguished conduct in rescuing and defending Goad confirmed me in my opinion, and I accordingly recommended him for a commission, which, to my great gratification, Her Majesty was graciously pleased to bestow upon him."—"Forty-one Years in India," vol. ii., p. 154.

† "Official History," p. 118. Lord Roberts and other writers state that Captain Powell died of his wounds.

the whole column by their successful execution of one of the most trying tasks soldiers can be called upon to perform.

"4. The Major-General congratulates Major FitzHugh and the officers of the 5th Gurkhas on this further proof of the high state of efficiency of the regiment."

Arrangements having been made for sending the sick and wounded, as well as the captured guns, to Kohat, and preparations having been vigorously pushed forward for halting the troops at Kuram and other posts during the winter, General Roberts determined to carry out the second part of his instructions, the possession of Khost.* On the 27th of December General Roberts started to explore that valley which lies directly south of Kuram. Its inhabitants are notorious, even among frontier tribesmen, for their turbulence, and they raided our line of communication. The strength of the column which Roberts took with him did not amount to more than 2,000 men.† On the 5th of January, 1879, he reached Yakubi, one march from Matun, "the name of a group of villages, some thirty in number."‡ About noon the Afghan Deputy-Governor of Khost came into camp and arranged to surrender the fort

* "Your first object will be to engage any of the troops belonging to the Amir of Kabul in occupation of Kurram, to drive them and the ruler from the valley, and to take possession of the same, as also of Khost."—"Official History," p. 93.

† CAVALRY.

1 squadron 10th Hussars. 3 troops 5th Punjab Cavalry.	Colonel H. H. Gough, V.C.

ARTILLERY.

No. 1 (Kohat) Mountain Battery. No. 2 (Derajat) Mountain Battery.	Lieutenant-Colonel A. H. Lindsay, R.A.

INFANTRY.

British: 200 men 72nd Highlanders. *Native:* 21st Punjab Infantry. 28th Punjab Infantry.	Colonel F. Barry Drew, 28th Foot, acting Brigadier-General.

‡ "Official History," p. 123.

which lies in the centre of the valley the following day. He then returned to Mathun, and the next morning, accompanied by his followers, he met the British column. "With him we went on, with an escort of the 10th Hussars. Arrived at the fort, the garrison turned out, about a couple of hundred match-lock men and two standards. They formed a street in front of the gate and dropped their standards in token of submission. We then went into the fort, which was but a mud-walled enclosure, very dirty and uninviting. After rather a long talk with the Governor, and a dish of tea in the pretty Russian china cups so often seen in Peshawar, we retired and pitched our camp." *

As Roberts had been warned by the Deputy-Governor that the force would be attacked, he "ordered the camp to be pitched in the form of a square as compactly as possible, with the transport animals and impedimenta in the centre, and strong picquets at the four angles." † The night passed without any disturbance, but when day broke a vast host of tribesmen were seen collecting on the neighbouring hills, and a troop of the 5th Punjab Cavalry, under Major J. C. Stewart, accompanied by Captain F. S. Carr, was sent out to reconnoitre. Three miles from camp the party came upon fifteen hundred or two thousand tribesmen. Stewart immediately sent a messenger to camp for assistance, and he began to retire slowly. Roberts, surveying the scene, realised that the perilous difficulties were not few. "It was evident to me," says the general in his dispatch, "that the time had arrived when prompt and vigorous action was required to ensure our safety. The strength of the column, which amounted to about 2,000 men all told, was insignificant in comparison with the number we might find arrayed against us. We were separated by many miles of

* "Old Memories," by Sir Hugh Gough, *Pall Mall Magazine*, vol. xvii., p. 206.

† "Forty-one Years in India," vol. ii., p. 159.

difficult country from our nearest support, and I judged it to be a matter of urgent necessity that the tribes who had dared to organise an attack on our camp should receive speedy and severe punishment. The general ordered all the available cavalry to proceed, under the command of Colonel Gough, to the support of the reconnoitring force, and he sent the 28th Punjab Infantry, under Colonel J. Hudson, and Major Swinley's mountain guns also, to support them. Gough's force consisted of 70 men of the Hussars and three troops of the 5th Punjab Cavalry—about two hundred and fifty sabres in all. "Moving at a good pace, we came up with the troop of the 5th retiring steadily. The tribesmen were advancing with a flourish of swords and banners, but on seeing the reinforcements they retired, skirting the foot of the hills." The cavalry, regardless of the broken ground, followed them up. The 10th Hussars, dismounting, took up a position on the top of some low mounds, and opened a steady fire on the enemy. The 5th Punjab Cavalry, on their right, also having dismounted, opened fire. The enemy began to retire. The cavalry followed. The Hussars again dismounted and opened fire, while a troop of the 5th Punjab Cavalry, led by Major B. Williams, "made a brilliant charge up a hill to the centre of the enemy's position, and, rapidly dismounting, commenced to harass them in sheer retreat."* When the 28th Punjab Infantry and the Mountain Battery arrived, the guns proceeded to shell the enemy on the hilltops while the infantry kept them in check.

Roberts, leaving Colonel Drew in charge of the camp with 200 Highlanders, the 21st Punjab Infantry, and a Mountain Battery, rode off with his staff to join Gough. While watch-

* Brigadier-General H. Gough's Report, dated 9th January, 1879. Gough adds: "This charge, which was personally led by Major B. Williams, struck me as one of the most gallant episodes in cavalry warfare I had ever seen."

ing his progress on the heights the general heard heavy firing in the direction of the camp, and taking with him a troop of the 5th Cavalry he hurried back to camp, and found it had been attacked on two sides, but Drew had prevented the enemy from coming to close quarters. The ground still swarmed with the hostile tribesmen. Roberts determined to move out and disperse them. He ordered Colonel Barry Drew to carry the villages on the right and rear, and to plunder and burn them as a punishment to the inhabitants for having harboured the enemy and fired on the troops.* "This was an act of retributive justice, which I considered necessary for the due safety of the troops under my command; and I submit that both the circumstances of the time and the subsequent result fully justified the action which I judged it necessary and prudent to take. The punishment was not inflicted without consideration and discrimination; no villages were burned which had not made common cause with the enemy against us." †

Roberts, who was censured by exacting critics for burning Afghan hamlets which had sheltered the enemy and fired on our troops, lived to be severely criticised for refusing to burn the farmsteads of the Boers.

During these operations the enemy, numbering some 400 men, were seen running out of a village which was being attacked in front by the British. Roberts ordered Major J. C. Stewart, 5th Punjab Cavalry, who had with him about 40 sabres, to charge them. "He said: 'Am I to make prisoners, sir?' I replied: 'No; do not stay to do that; your party is too small. Disperse them as best you can.' By this order I meant him to understand that he was to kill as many of the enemy as he could, but that he was to keep his men together, and not to let them scatter or encumber themselves with

* "Official History of the Second Afghan War," p. 125.

† Letter, Headquarters, Kuram Field Force, Peiwar, 1st April, 1879.

prisoners." The result of the charge was that between 30 and 40 of the enemy were killed. This was the number given in the official telegram, but a "nought" got added during its transmission, and the number killed appeared in the newspapers as "between 300 and 400." "Under the circumstances of the time it would have been extremely rash in Major Stewart to have attempted to make prisoners, and I conceive that I was perfectly justified in giving him the order I did." * It is, indeed, manifest that if the forty troopers had dispersed in the attempt to secure prisoners among four hundred Afghans, they would have been slain to a man.

Before dark the troops returned to camp, and the enemy, having been given a severe lesson, made no further attacks on it. The force halted for some time at Matun. The general made frequent tours in the valley and ordered a careful survey to be made of the southern portion of the surrounding hills. His instructions were to take possession of Khost, but, owing to the smallness of the force, this could not be done. The troops were also needed in the Kuram Valley. On the 27th of January the return march was begun, and on the 4th of February Roberts reached Kuram. His time was now mainly employed in inspecting the roads and the defensive posts, and in examining the arrangements for housing the troops.† This was so well done that the force wintered in excellent health, in spite of the rigorous climate. At the end of February Sir Frederick Haines, the Commander-in-Chief in India, paid visits of inspection to the Peshawar Valley and Kuram Field Force. On the 28th of March he wrote to the Duke of Cambridge: "At Kurram I found a magnificent force paraded under General Roberts' command. . . . The troops are in the highest state of health and efficiency—their style

* Letter, Headquarters, Kuram Field Force, Peiwar, 1st April, 1879.

† "Forty-one Years in India," vol. ii., p. 165.

of march admirable."* The next day the Commander-in-Chief ascended the Peiwar Kotal through a cleared track in the snow, which lay a foot deep. On reaching the summit he found a guard of honour of the 2nd battalion of the 8th King's was drawn up outside their mess-house. "The Commander-in-Chief briefly addressed the men and officers, alluding to the strong tie which held him to them, as he had spent some of the happiest years of his life in the 1st battalion of the gallant King's." During the day Haines visited some of the principal points of interest, "which entailed some severe climbing," and had the contest described by those who took part in it. "I can add nothing to the descriptions already given, beyond an acknowledgment that General Roberts had a most onerous task in hand when he attacked that most formidable position, and that it was carried with a loss of life merely nominal." Sir Frederick Haines, accompanied by Roberts, returned to the camp at Kuram. "The tent occupied by the Commander-in-Chief formed the head of the street, and was remarkable for its exceedingly small and unpretentious appearance—if, indeed, it was not the smallest in camp." The following is a graceful sketch of General Roberts by one who visited him in the head-quarters camp—"A shaggy beard held the lower part of his face, so that at first I hardly recognised him; but the old cheerful smile and kindly manner were unchanged."

During April General Roberts was employed in making the numerous preparations for another forward movement. On the 10th of April the 92nd Highlanders arrived at Kuram, and three days later the Field Force was concentrated on a plateau four miles east of Ali Khel. During the month of May reconnoitring parties were employed in all directions, and the general himself saw all the passes over the Peiwar.

* "The Life of Field-Marshal Sir Frederick Paul Haines," by Robert S. Rait, p. 260.

The transport had been better organised, supplies accumulated, and Roberts was in readiness to obey the order to advance which he had been led by the Viceroy's private secretary to expect.

The preliminary operations in the war had been a complete success. Three British forces had occupied important positions in Afghanistan. Sir Donald Stewart had occupied Kandahar in January. General Roberts held the Shutargardan Pass and was prepared to march on Kabul, but forty miles distant. Sir Samuel Browne had captured Ali Musjid, pushed his way through the Khyber defile, and on the 20th December British troops again encamped on a sandy plain outside Jellalabad. The ruined fortifications reminded them of the memorable siege, its noble defence by "the illustrious garrison," and its great deliverance by Pollock.*

On arrival at Jellalabad, authentic intelligence was received that Shere Ali had fled from Kabul, and that his son, Yakub Khan, reigned in his stead. On the 23rd of December Shere Ali wrote to the officer of the British Government:

"And since you have begun the quarrel and hostilities, and have advanced on Afghan territory, this suppliant before God, with the unanimous consent and advice of all the nobles, grandees, and of the army in Afghanistan, having abandoned his troops, his realm, and all the possessions of his crown, has departed with expedition, accompanied by a few attendants, to St. Petersburg, the capital of the Tsar of Russia, where, before a congress, the whole history of the transactions between myself and yourselves will be submitted to all the Powers (of Europe).† But Shere Ali was destined not to reach St. Petersburg. On his arrival at Mazar-i-Sharef, the chief town of the province of Turkestan, he received a letter from General Kaufmann

* "Life of Field-Marshal Sir Neville Chamberlain," by G. W. Forrest, pp. 122-8.

† "Correspondence on Afghanistan," p. 12.

entreating him to return to his kingdom and make terms with the British Government. Shere Ali discovered that he had been used as a tool by Russia, and after his flight he could never again rule at Kabul. His health of body and mind had begun to fail, and on the 26th February Yakub Khan, his son, wrote to Major Cavagnari, at Jellalabad, as follows:

"I now write a second time, in accordance with former friendship, to inform you that to-day, Wednesday, the 4th Kabiul-awal (the 26th February, 1879), a letter was received by post from Turkestan announcing that my worthy and exalted father had, upon Friday, 29th Safar (the 21st February, 1879), obeyed the call of the summoner and, throwing off the dress of existence, hastened to the region of the Divine mercy. Since every living thing must relinquish the robe of life, and must drink the draught of death, I remain resigned and patient under this heavy calamity and misfortune.

"As my exalted father was an ancient friend of the illustrious British Government I have, out of friendship, sent you this intimation." *

The tone of his letters afforded a favourable opportunity for opening negotiations with Yakub Khan. On the 7th of March, Major Cavagnari, under the direct instructions of the Viceroy, wrote to him stating the terms upon which the British Government should arrange a peace and renew its alliance with Afghanistan. Yakub replied on the 12th of March. He agreed not "to enter into any friendship or relation with other foreign powers without the consent and advice of the British Government," and, "in accordance with the desire of the British Government, several officers (sahibs of rank, with a proper escort) should reside on the part of the British Government in the capital only, which is Kabul, but they must not

* "Correspondence on Afghanistan," p. 12.

LORD ROBERTS AT ALI KHEL, 1879

From a Photograph by Bourne and Shepherd

interfere in any of the affairs of Afghanistan." He also made a counter-proposal that, "out of magnanimity and friendship," the British Government should abandon the condition relating to the concession of territory, "and, relinquishing the territories of the Afghan states which you have taken possession of recently, you should positively not interfere with them." Cavagnari replied: "I beg in a friendly manner to inform your Highness that this is a proposal which it is quite impossible for the British Government to accede to." In April the Peshawar Field Force moved to the breezy upland of Gundamak, and took up a position on the direct road from Peshawar to Kabul. Yakub, realising the importance of the forward movements of the Kuram and Peshawar Field Forces, announced that "the desire of having an interview with the (British) officers of high rank, and holding a conference with them, has taken hold of the skirt of my heart." On the 6th of May Yakub rode into the British camp, and was received with every honour and distinction. On the morning of the 27th of May, Mr. Jenkins, of the Bengal Civil Service, galloped away from Gundamak on his way to Peshawar and Simla, "with a particular-looking tin case strapped to his back." It was the Treaty of Gundamak, which had been signed on the previous day. It was ratified by the Viceroy four days later. After considerable demur the Amir consented to the assignment of the Kuram, Pishin and Sibi Valleys, together with the complete control of the Khyber and Michni Passes and over the tribesmen who occupied them. The 3rd Article established the paramount control of the Indian Government over the Amir's external relations. In return the Amir was to be assisted against foreign aggression, and he and his successors were to receive an annual subsidy of £60,000. The 4th Article of the treaty provided for the residence at Kabul of a British Resident, and for the right to depute British agents, as occa-

sion might require, to all parts of the Afghan frontier.* Roberts considered that the treaty was premature, as the arrogance of the Afghans had not been sufficiently humiliated by defeat, and that the peace would not be a lasting one, and would only end in worse trouble in the near future. "They will all be murdered," said Lord Lawrence, "every one of them." Men who, like Roberts, were experienced in Afghan affairs, knew that the treaty was not worth the paper it was written on, but it had to be made for party purposes at home. It enabled Lord Beaconsfield to tell the City magnates at dinner that "an adequate and scientific frontier had been accomplished and achieved with a precision of plan and a rapidity of execution not easily equalled in the annals of statesmanship." On the penultimate day of the session the debate on the Afghan treaty ended in a count out. The House of Commons were warned "that the real difficulties were only coming, and had yet to come," but they were satisfied with a reassuring statement made by a young under-secretary, and dispersed for the vacation. The difficulties came sooner than was expected.

Yakub Khan, who had ceded Afghan territory and diminished the independence of his kingdom, "left Gundamak," Lord Lytton wrote, "not apparently merely submissive—but satisfied, trustful and friendly." Major Cavagnari, who had shown great ability in negotiating the treaty with Yakub Khan, was appointed "envoy and minister plenipotentiary at the Court of Kabul." On the 15th of July he arrived at Kuram, accompanied by Mr. William Jenkins, C.I.E., of the Civil Service, and Lieutenant Hamilton, V.C., Surgeon-Major Jelly, twenty-five cavalry and fifty infantry of the Guides Corps. On the 17th of July Roberts marched with Cavagnari to Ali Khel. The next day they encamped with a substantial body of troops at the spot in the Hazar Darakht

* "Official History," App. V.

defile which marked the new frontier line between British Afghanistan and the dominions of the Amir. "At nine o'clock on the 19th inst., Sirdar Khushdil Khan, late Governor of Turkestan, who had been deputed by the Amir to conduct the Envoy to his capital, arrived in the British camp. After a short conversation, Major Cavagnari and the other members of the Embassy, accompanied by Sirdar Khushdil Khan and by myself, with the officers of my staff, and with the Guides Cavalry and a squadron of the 12th Bengal Cavalry as escort, left for Kasim Khel, where the Afghan camp had been pitched. A guard of honour of the 67th Foot which had been drawn up presented arms, and a salute of fifteen guns was fired as the Envoy mounted his horse. At about a quarter of a mile from our camp two squadrons of the Amir's cavalry and about three hundred Ghilzai levies were paraded in line and received the Envoy with a salute. The whole party, accompanied by about fifty British officers, to whom I had given leave of absence for the occasion, then proceeded up the Surkai Kotal to Kasim Khel, where we dismounted, and were courteously received by Sirdar Khushdil Khan in his durbar tent.

"After tea and other refreshments had been served, Major Cavagnari intimated to the Sirdar that the British officers who were present were desirous of visiting the Shutargardan Pass, the summit of which was about two miles distant, and requested his permission for them to do so. This was at once granted, and the Sirdar, accompanied by the Envoy, myself, and the whole of the officers, rode to the top of the pass, and remained there for some time. On our return to the Afghan camp we were all most hospitably entertained by the Sirdar at luncheon in the Kabuli style, after which I and the officers with me took leave of the Sirdar and Major Cavagnari and returned to our camp, which had moved back

to Dreikhuli. An escort of Afghan cavalry accompanied me to the frontier." *

As Major Cavagnari had proceeded towards Kabul, and as there was nothing apparently which at present required General Roberts's presence in Kuram, he, on the 2nd of July, took leave of the Field Force, and went to Simla to take his seat, as a military member, on a recently appointed Army Commission. So ended Roberts's first campaign as an independent commander. All recognised the strategic skill which had won the Peiwar Kotal, and the hard work done in the Kuram Valley. For his services General Roberts was accorded the thanks of both Houses of Parliament, and was created a Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath.

* Letter, dated Ali Khel, 20th July, 1879.

CHAPTER V

THE SECOND AFGHAN WAR (*continued*)

On July 24th, 1879, Sir Louis Cavagnari entered Kabul, and was assigned quarters in the Bala Hissar. The same day he wrote to the Viceroy: "Nothing could have exceeded the hospitable treatment we have experienced since we left the Kuram frontier, and our reception was all that could be desired." On the 28th of July he telegraphed: "This morning, accompanied by my staff, I rode to Baber's tomb and round the environs of Kabul. Returned through one of the city bazaars. People very orderly, many saluted, Millah Shah Mahomed and some Afghan cavalry accompanied me. Visited Amir this evening." But murmurs of the storm that was about to burst were soon heard. On the 6th of August Cavagnari telegraphed:

"Alarming reports personally reached me to-day, from several sources, of the mutinous behaviour of the Herat regiment lately arrived here, some of the men having been seen going about the city with drawn swords, and using inflammable language against Amir and his English visitors; and I was strongly advised not to go out for a day or two.

"I sent for Foreign Minister, and as he was confident that the reports were exaggerated, we went out as usual.

"I do not doubt that there is disaffection among troops on account of arrears of pay, and especially about compulsory service, but the Amir and his ministers are confident that they can manage them."

On the following day Cavagnari telegraphed: "State of affairs reported yesterday continuing in milder degree. Amir professing complete confidence to maintain discipline." Cavagnari was full of pride and courage, and believed himself secure in his achievements. "Never fear," was the answer to the native officer who warned him; "keep up your heart: dogs that bark don't bite." "But these dogs do bite; there is real danger," urged the man. Cavagnari quietly said: "They can only kill the three or four of us here, and our deaths will be avenged." On the 2nd of September his telegram concluded with the words: "All well." * It was his last message. The next morning the Herat soldiers came to the treasury in the Bala Hissar for their pay. Failing to obtain the full amount, they proceeded to the house occupied by the British Embassy, where, they were told, was "lots of money," and attacked it. The garrison made a desperate resistance. But courage against a host of well-armed and trained men was of no avail. Cavagnari, his staff and escort of heroic Guides, after defending themselves with desperate gallantry, perished to a man.

General Roberts was deep in the work of the Army Commission when, on the morning of the 5th of September, he received the following telegram from Captain Conolly, Political Officer at Ali Khel, dated the 4th of September:

"One Jelaladin Ghilzai, who says he is in Sir Louis Cavagnari's secret service, has arrived in hot haste from Kabul, and solemnly states that yesterday morning the Residency was attacked by three regiments who had mutinied for their pay, they having guns, and being joined by a portion of six other regiments. The Embassy and escort were

* A dispatch to the Right Honourable Viscount Cranbrook, Her Majesty's Secretary of State for India, Simla, September 15th, 1879, in the Blue Book, "Afghanistan," No. 1, p. 8.

defending themselves when he left about noon yesterday. I hope to receive further news."

Late that night the Government received intelligence from Captain Conolly that left no doubt as to the fate of the Embassy and escort. On the afternoon of the 6th, General Roberts left Simla, and on the 29th he again took command of the Kuram Field Force, and issued the following order to the troops under his command:

"The Government of India having decided that the Kuram Field Force shall proceed with all possible despatch to Kabul, in response to his Highness the Ameer's appeal for aid, and with the object of avenging the dastardly murder of the British representative and his escort, Sir Frederick Roberts feels sure that the troops under his command will respond to the call with a determination to prove themselves worthy of the sacred duty entrusted to them, and of the high reputation they have maintained during the recent campaign. The Major-General need address no words of exhortation to soldiers whose courage and fortitude have been so well proved. The Afghan tribes are numerous, but without organisation, the regular army is undisciplined, and, whatever may be the disparity in numbers, such foes can never be formidable to British troops. The dictates of humanity require that a distinction should be made between the peaceable inhabitants of Afghanistan and the treacherous murderers, for whom a just retribution is in store, and Sir Frederick Roberts desires to impress on all ranks the necessity for treating the inoffensive population with justice, forbearance, and clemency. The future comfort and well-being of the force depend largely on the friendliness of our relations with the districts from which our supplies must be drawn; prompt payment is enjoined for all articles purchased by departments and individuals, and all disputes must be at once referred to a

political officer for decision. The Major-General confidently looks forward to the successful accomplishment of the object of the expedition, and the re-establishment of order and settled government in Afghanistan."

Before arriving at Ali Khel, Sir Frederick Roberts telegraphed that a small body of troops should march with all speed towards the Shutargardan. On the morning of the 11th the crest of the pass was occupied. "No enemy was visible anywhere, and three Afghan horsemen, who suddenly came into view from the steep zigzags below, were evidently much surprised at seeing a long line of men on the horizon, talking and laughing after their long march, for they speedily turned their horses' heads and disappeared." The troops at once proceeded to entrench themselves. The two immediate problems Sir Frederick Roberts had to consider were transport and supply. But the dispatches show with what care and forethought and attention to minute details difficulties were overcome and the supplies transport arranged. By the 18th of September the troops, under the command of Brigadier-General Baker, were firmly established and entrenched on the crest of the Shutargardan. On the 24th of September Baker and part of his brigade moved down from the Shutargardan by many steep zigzags into the bed of a rivulet, one of the sources of the Logar River. Following this stream, they turned sharply to the right and entered the Dobandi Defile, "whose stupendous perpendicular sides draw closer and closer together, till, at a point called by the local tribesmen the Dur-i-Dosukh, or Gate of Hell, they so nearly meet that men can only pass between them in single file, and baggage animals have often to be relieved of burdens too wide to squeeze through the narrow opening. Emerging out of this gloomy fissure, the track crosses a narrow valley, then threads its way between huge fragments of rock up the face of a high

hill to the Shinkai Kotal, and finally descends by a succession of stony shelves to the valley of the Logar, where, hidden in a great ravine some three miles long by half a mile wide, the numerous hamlets, known by the collective name of Kushi, lie among meadows and orchards—a true 'delight.'" *

On the 27th of September Sir Frederick Roberts moved from Ali Khel to the Shutargardan, accompanied by the headquarters of the Cavalry Brigade, one squadron of the 9th Lancers, the 5th Punjab Cavalry, 28th Punjab Infantry, and a detachment of the 5th Punjab Infantry. When about halfway through the pass, Roberts pushed on with the cavalry in order to reach the pass before dark. On arriving at the most narrow part of the defile they found themselves confronted with a large party of Afghans, who had taken up a position commanding the track. "Waiting till the headquarters came up, the enemy let drive into the 'brown' of them." Dr. Townsend, with whom Roberts was talking at the time, was severely wounded. The infantry came up, the march was continued, and presently a large body of Afghans was seen retreating. A small detachment consisting of eighteen Highlanders and forty-five Sikhs, led by Colour-Sergeant Hector MacDonald and Jemadar Sher Muhammad, fought their way up a steep spur commanding the pass, drove off the enemy, and then cleared the track, and enabled the troops to carry out the programme of the march.†

On arriving at the top of the Shutargardan Pass that evening, Roberts heard that the Amir Yakub Khan, with

* "The Second Afghan War," by Colonel H. B. Hanna, vol. iii., p. 57. "So far the land of promise had fulfilled itself; but the Logar Valley was a snare and delusion as regarded its beauty and general fertility, which was solely confined to the immediate vicinity of the river—all else being a sandy, stony plain, and quite hot, although some seven thousand feet above the sea."—"Old Memories," by Sir Hugh Gough, *Pall Mall Magazine*, vol. xvii., p. 276.

† "But for whose excellent services," writes Sir Frederick Roberts, "it might have been impossible to carry out the programme of the march."

some of his sirdars, among whom was Daoud Shah, the Commander-in-Chief of the Afghan army, a suite of forty-five persons and an escort of two hundred strong, had arrived in General Baker's camp. The following morning Sir Frederick Roberts rode into Kushi, and on his arrival paid a formal visit to the Amir. Yakub Khan returned it the same afternoon, and took occasion to urge forcibly the advisability of Roberts delaying his advance. "I replied that my orders were peremptory, and that it was my duty, as it was my determination, to press on to Kabul with all possible speed." Yakub Khan returned to his camp, and Roberts wrote to the Viceroy: "I believe I am treating the Amir in all respects as you would wish; until something is proved against him, he must, of course, be considered as the Ruler of Kabul; the occasion did not require that there should be any parade of troops on his arrival in camp, or that anything beyond an ordinary guard of honour should be drawn up to receive him when he visited me." The Amir took advantage of his stay in camp to keep in close touch with the leaders of the Afghan army at Kabul. "Nek Mahomed, uncle of the Amir, came from Kabul, and met the Amir riding into Charasia on the afternoon of the 5th October. They had a long talk together. Nek Mahomed returned immediately afterwards to Kabul, saying, in a loud tone as he left, that he was going to disperse the troops. I hear he was the leading spirit in the fight of the 6th, and had his horse wounded."

On the morning of October 2nd, Roberts's force marched from Kushi towards Kabul. Its whole strength consisted of 2,500 British and 3,700 native soldiers, and it was advancing against an unknown number of regular regiments well supplied with artillery and modern arms of precision, and a nation of fighting mountaineers. Roberts, in order not to lessen his small force, had not endeavoured to preserve his

communications, and he could hope for no timely reinforcements. Roberts's march on Kabul was a splendid piece of daring.*

On the afternoon of the 5th of October Sir Frederick Roberts, accompanied by the whole column, except a rear-guard under Brigadier-General Macpherson, left to protect ammunition and stores, encamped in the vicinity of the group of hamlets, known as Charasia, eleven miles from Kabul. The total strength of the force immediately under Lord Roberts's command was about 3,800 men, including gunners.† On arriving at Charasia, cavalry reconnaissances were sent forward on three distinct roads leading to Kabul. A few shots

* "My Service in the Indian Army and After," by General Sir J. Luther Vaughan, p. 212.

† The troops actually under his immediate command were as follows:

ARTILLERY.

F.A. Royal Horse Artillery, Major Smyth-Windham.
G-3, Royal Artillery, Major Parry.
No. 2 Mountain Battery (4 guns), Captain Swinley.
Total, 16 guns.

CAVALRY.

Under Brigadier-General Dunham Massy.
9th Lancers (1 squadron), Captain Apperley.
5th Punjab Cavalry (2 squadrons), Major Hammond.
12th Bengal Cavalry (3 squadrons), Major Green.
14th Bengal Lancers (3 squadrons), Lieutenant-Colonel Ross.
Total, 9 squadrons.

INFANTRY.

Under Brigadier-General Baker.

British.

67th Foot (half battalion), Colonel C. B. Knowles.
72nd Highlanders, Lieutenant-Colonel W. H. J. Clarke.
92nd Highlanders, Lieutenant-Colonel G. H. Parker.

Native.

5th Punjab Infantry, Major H. M. Pratt.
23rd Pioneers, Lieutenant-Colonel A. A. Currie.
5th Gurkhas, Major A. FitzHugh.
2 Gatling guns, Major A. Broadfoot.
Total, 5½ battalions.

were fired at these parties, but no trace could be detected of any large hostile gathering. Dawn showed another sight. Large masses of Afghan troops had taken up a position happily formed by nature for withstanding the march of invaders. It consisted of a bay of hills running one above another, and with a front extending from two to three miles. In the centre of the crescent the enemy was posted on a strongly entrenched and almost inaccessible cliff some 2,000 feet high; his right rested on a detached range which ended in a rugged summit 1,800 feet above Charasia; his left was on a lofty plateau which rises 1,000 feet above the defile through which the road and river run. Above the gorge on the other side of the river rise other heights, which run down and bound the eastern part of the bay. The Afghans, as they saw the working party advance to the Sang-i-Nawishta defile, considered that the main attack would be delivered on their left against the steep plateau that commanded the gorge. But General Roberts, considering that this position could only be captured by an immense sacrifice of life, determined to make the real attack by an outflanking movement to their right, while he distracted their attention by a feint attack on their left. He therefore ordered Major White, 72nd Highlanders, who commanded the party near the gorge, to threaten the pass, to prevent the enemy's advances towards the village of Charasia, to advance within artillery range of the enemy's position above the gorge, "and when the outflanking movement had been thoroughly developed and the enemy were in full retreat, but not before, to push the cavalry through the gorge and pursue." General Baker, with 702 British and 1,293 native soldiers, he sent against the enemy's right. Baker's small force advanced in and from the extreme left of the village of Charasia, a company of the 72nd, under Captain Hunt, attacked the heights in front of

the left peak, the extreme right of the enemy's position, while Lieut.-Colonel Clarke, with the remainder of the 72nd Highlanders, protected by the fire of two mountain guns, advanced in front against the low ridges, which connected the enemy's centre with the front of the left peak. The heights on the left were steep and rugged, and from behind their breastworks the Afghans plied them with a biting fire. The Highlanders, scrambling up from crag to crag, reached the first peak.* Here they halted. Two companies of the 5th Gurkhas under Captain Cooke, V.C., were sent to support them. Then they again went forward, driving the Afghans from their coigns of vantage. The resistance to the front attack was a stubborn one, the advance equally slow, and two companies of the 5th Gurkhas under Major FitzHugh and 200 men of the 5th Punjab Infantry under Captain Hall were sent to reinforce it. Slowly they breasted the steep hill-side. The Afghan commander, now perceiving the direction of the real attack, hurried reinforcements to his right: but it was too late. After two hours' hard fighting the Red Ridge was carried; the Afghans, exposed to a cross-fire, began to waver. "The general advance was now sounded, and the first position gallantly carried by the 72nd Highlanders, 5th Gurkhas, and 5th Punjab Infantry. The enemy fought well to the last, and charged close up to the Gurkhas, who, however, commanded by Major FitzHugh, repulsed them with heavy loss. In this affair Lieutenant and Adjutant Martin was very forward.†

* "The dark green kilts went up the steep, rocky hill-side at a fine rate, though one would occasionally drop and roll several feet down the slope. . . . Both sides took advantage of every available atom of cover, but still the kilts pressed on and up, and it was altogether as pretty a piece of Light Infantry drill as could well be seen."

† From Major-General Sir F. S. Roberts, K.C.B., V.C., Commanding Kabul Field Forces, to the Chief of the Staff, Army Headquarters, Simla, Bala, Kabul, October 20, 1879.

The enemy, driven over the crest, now took up a fresh position on a ridge some 600 yards farther back, but still well in advance of their main position at the centre of the crescent. Covered by the fire of the mountain battery, many a rush was made at it. For half an hour the Afghans held their own. Then a company of the 23rd Pioneers under Lieutenant Chesney, supported by the 72nd and the 5th Gurkhas and two companies of the 92nd (detached by Major White from the right attack), made one more rush, and the enemy again fell back on the main ridge. The British troops followed them at the double, and before they could make another stand the ridge was carried. As the enemy's line of defence was now exposed to being taken in reverse, we soon began to retreat from this position on the Sang-i-Nawishta, advantage of which was speedily taken by the troops under Major White, "who throughout the day conducted the operations on the right in the most satisfactory manner." A general advance was now made (but no further resistance was offered), and General Baker occupied the last peak overlooking the defile, through which our cavalry, supported by a small body, had already pushed. They were, however, held in check by the enemy's rear-guard. The mountain guns opened on them from the heights above, and the 23rd Pioneers and 5th Punjab Infantry, rushing forward, dispersed them. Darkness prevented the carrying on of the pursuit. The 23rd Pioneers and 5th Gurkhas were pushed forward to the plain before the defile, and the troops, after their hard-won victory, bivouacked for the night. The Afghans fought stubbornly, but the English general by his skilful tactics, his well-timed orders, and the valour of his soldiers gained the victory.*

* "To watch for hours the fluctuations of a fight—so near as to be able to note individual acts of gallantry—to know that one can do nothing to determine its issue, that all the troops one could give have been given, and that

At Charasia, as in every battle of the campaign, there were some fine examples of individual heroism. Private MacMahon of the 72nd Highlanders—who bore the brunt of the fighting—scaled a hill, on the crest of which was a sangar filled with men. Major White (the gallant defender of Ladysmith)* of the same regiment, not caring to expose his men on a particularly steep bit of ground which was enfiladed by a few Afghans posted in rear of some rocks, took a rifle from one of his men and stalked the enemy single-handed. Both men received the Victoria Cross. During the day Lieutenant Grant and Colour-Sergeant Hector MacDonald of the 72nd also greatly distinguished themselves by dislodging with a few men in a most daring manner a body of the enemy who from a height above were firing into the camp.†

On the morning of the 6th September Roberts, with his victorious troops, passed the Sang-i-Nawishta defile, and

* Field-Marshal Sir George White, V.C., G.C.B.

† A few days before Colour-Sergeant Hector MacDonald and Jemadar There Mahomed, with a detachment of about sixty men of the 92nd Highlanders and 3rd Sikhs, had displayed great courage and skill in defeating a large body of the enemy in the Hazardarakoi defiles and opening the road to the advancing columns. For these two acts of skill and daring Hector MacDonald was awarded a commission. (The late Brigadier-General Sir H. A. MacDonald, K.C.B., D.S.O.) See p. 89 *supra*.

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those left behind are too few to provide a sure refuge for themselves and their comrades in case the attack should fail, as more than once seemed likely, needs a higher courage and stronger powers of endurance than to direct an engagement or lead a storming column; and no man could have gone through the ordeal more bravely than Sir Frederick Roberts. Racked with fear for the safety of his troops, of his sick, of his stores, of the thousands of camp-followers who looked to him for protection, he attended calmly to every detail by which the peril could be lightened, sending out cavalry patrols to drive off the tribesmen, establishing strongly fortified outposts, and seeing to it that the work of putting the camp into a state of defence went on without intermission. All that he did was well done, but inexpressible must have been his relief when the danger, against which he was providing, had been dispelled, and the road to Kabul lay clear before him."—"The Second Afghan War," by Colonel H. B. Hanna, vol. iii., p. 76.

camped at Boni Hissar, two miles north of the Bala Hissar.* He now heard that the citadel had been evacuated, but that three mutinous regiments from Kohistan were entrenching themselves on a high hill beyond it and immediately overlooking the city. He therefore, on the 8th of October, "detached Brigadier-General Massy, with eight squadrons of cavalry, to watch the roads leading from the north side of the city to Bamian and Kohistan, in order to cut off the line of retreat. At the same time Brigadier-General Baker, with a force consisting of six companies 92nd Highlanders, two companies 72nd Highlanders, a wing of the 67th Regiment, two companies 5th Goorkhas, 23rd Pioneers, four mountain guns and two gatlings, prepared to attack the position on the hill. By sunset on the 8th General Massy had arrived at Aliabad, on the Bamian road, having found the Sherpur cantonment deserted, and having taken possession of 78 guns found in it. General Baker was prevented by nightfall from opening his attack on the evening of the 8th; he was joined before daylight on the 9th by General Macpherson with additional troops, but during the night the enemy evacuated their position and took to flight, leaving twelve guns behind them. The cavalry in two detachments, under Generals Massy and Hugh Gough, were sent in pursuit, but the Afghan troops had so completely dispersed that only a few small parties were overtaken." † General Roberts's camp was on the following day pitched on

* "Our gallant Commander must indeed have been proud to feel that, notwithstanding the almost insuperable obstacles to be overcome, and the difficulties that had to be contended with in the short space of one month and five days from the news of the massacre of Sir Louis Cavagnari and his escort being received at Simla, we were at the gates of Kabul. The word 'impossible' was never recognised by him; and, knowing that such was the case, the troops, from the General to the private serving under him, felt bound to overcome anything and everything that might delay their progress."—"Old Memories," *Pall Mall Magazine,* vol. xvii., pp. 278-9.

† To the Right Honourable Viscount Cranbrook, Her Majesty's Secretary of State for India. Simla, October 16, 1879.

the Siah Sang ridge immediately overlooking the Bala Hissar and the city. On the 10th of October he rode to the Sherpur cantonment north of Kabul, and dispatched the 5th Punjab Cavalry thither to protect the stores and seventy-six pieces of ordnance found there. The next day the general and his staff, with a small escort, visited the far-famed citadel of Bala Hissar, and examined the buildings occupied by Cavagnari and his suite. The first view of the Residency "was of the rear wall, still intact, but blackened on the top where the smoke from the burning ruins had swept across. At each angle where the side walls joined were seen the loopholes from which the fire of the little force on the roof had been directed against the overwhelming numbers attacking them. Every square foot round these loopholes was pitted with bullet-marks, the balls having cut deeply into the hard mud plaster." * Riding along the lane, and passing through a narrow gateway, they entered the main court of the Residency—about ninety feet square. At its northern end, where formerly stood a three-storied building, "are nothing but the bare walls, blackened and scarred by fire, and a huge heap of rubbish, the ruins of the walls and roof which fell in as the woodwork was destroyed. Portions of the partition walls still remain, jutting sullenly out from the mass of debris, and these only serve to make the place more desolate. The whitewashed walls on the left are here and there bespattered with blood, and on the raised basement on which the building stood are the remains of a large fire, the half-charred beams still resting among the ashes. The ruins are still smouldering. Whether, as suggested, any bodies were burned there is still an unsettled point; but in one room into which I went there can be no doubt fire had been used for such a purpose. The ashes were in the middle of the chamber, and near them were two skulls and a heap of human bones

* "The Afghan War of 1879-80," by Howard Hensman, p. 53.

still fetid. It would seem as if a desperate struggle had taken place in this room, the blood-stains on the floor and walls being clearly discernible." *

Early on the morning of the 12th of October the Amir, Yakub Khan, went on foot to Roberts's tent with two attendants, and declared his resolution to resign the government of Afghanistan.† "He said," telegraphed Roberts, "he had intended doing so before going to Kushi, but had allowed himself to be overpersuaded. He was in very low spirits, and said that his life had been a miserable one; that he would rather be a grass-cutter in the English camp than ruler of Afghanistan, and begged he might live in this camp until he could be sent to India, or London, or wherever the Viceroy might desire to send him. I placed a tent at his disposal, ordered breakfast to be prepared for him, and begged him to think over the matter for two or three hours, and said that I would see him again at ten o'clock, the time appointed the previous evening for His Highness to come to my camp and accompany me to the Bala Hissar." ‡ Roberts added: "At ten o'clock I had a second interview with the Amir, who stated that he had quite decided to give up the throne of Kabul; that he could not possibly accompany me to the Bala Hissar, but that he would send his eldest son, and all his ministers would be in attendance. I again pointed out the serious step His Highness was taking, but finding his mind was made up, I told him I would telegraph to the Viceroy for instructions; that, of course, he could not be forced to remain on as Amir against his will, but that I would ask him to retain the title until I could receive a

* "The Afghan War of 1879-80," by Howard Hensman.

† To the Right Honourable Viscount Cranbrook, Simla, October 23, 1879.

‡ Telegram from General Roberts, Bala Hissar (through Shutargardan), 13th October, 1879.

reply to this telegram." At noon the general, accompanied by a brilliant staff and the principal sirdars of Kabul, descended from the heights. As Sir Frederick, with the heir-apparent, mounted on a fine grey Arab, on his right hand, rode slowly down the long avenue of troops, the infantry presented arms and the cavalry trumpets brayed forth a salute. As the procession entered the Peshawar Gate the guns of F.A. Royal Horse Artillery fired a royal salute, the band played the National Anthem, and at the same moment the British standard was unfurled over the gateway. In the Audience Chamber of the Bala Hissar the general held a durbar, and read out a proclamation announcing "that in order to provide for the restoration and maintenance of order, the city of Kabul and the surrounding country to a distance of ten miles are placed under martial law." He also offered a reward "for the surrender of any person, whether soldier or civilian, concerned in the attack of the British Embassy or for such information as may lead directly to his capture." The next day General Roberts made a formal entry into the city of Kabul, and, preceded by the Cavalry Brigade, and followed by five battalions of infantry, he and his staff rode through the principal streets and bazaars, including the great covered bazaar famous throughout Central Asia. That afternoon he notified the following to the troops:

"Headquarters, Kabul Field Force,
"Bala Hissar, Kabul,
"13*th October*, 1879.

"The following telegram, dated 10th of October, from the Viceroy and Governor-General of India to Major-General Sir Fred. Roberts, K.C.B., V.C., is published for information: 'The Viceroy requests General Roberts to accept his

cordial congratulations and those of the Government on the brilliant and important action of the 6th inst., and to convey to the gallant officers and men engaged at Charasia the assurance of His Excellency's high appreciation of the ability with which this action was directed, and the courage with which it was so successfully carried out.' In publishing the above telegram from His Excellency the Viceroy, Major-General Roberts desires to add his hearty congratulations to the troops of the Kabul Field Force on the successful results of their recent operations, culminating in the occupation of the Bala Hissar and the city of Kabul. With such troops a commander can do anything and go anywhere. Success is certain.

"The signal defeat of the Afghan Army and the rapid occupation of the capital of the country are nevertheless exploits of which the Kabul Field Force may well be proud, and it is a great satisfaction and pride to Sir Fred. Roberts to know that he has under his command troops capable of such achievements."

After the march through the streets, the 67th and the 5th Gurkhas were quartered in the town and upper Bala Hissar. Three days later, while Captain Shafto, R.A., was engaged in taking stock of the large quantity of war material in the upper Bala Hissar, a terrific explosion occurred in the magazine. The 67th escaped with the loss of one man, but the fall of an enormous mass of the wall of the fort killed one native officer and eleven non-commissioned officers and men of the 5th Gurkhas. Three sowars of the 5th Punjab Cavalry and five ordnance lascars were killed, while four other men were seriously injured. Roberts at once sent orders to the Gurkhas and the 67th to leave the building, "and not to wait even to bring away their tents, kits, or anything but

their ammunition, and I did not breathe freely till they were safe on Siah Sang." The 67th were provided with quarters for the night in the tents of the 72nd and 92nd Highlanders, whilst the Gurkhas were distributed over the camp. "There was given," says Lord Roberts, "on this occasion a very practical exemplification of the good feeling existing between the European soldiers and the Gurkhas. The 72nd and the 5th Gurkhas had been much associated from the commencement of the campaign, and a spirit of *camaraderie* had sprung up between them, resulting in the Highlanders now coming forward and insisting on making over their greatcoats to the little Gurkhas for the night—a very strong proof of their friendship, for at Kabul in October the nights are bitterly cold."

General Roberts had now to consider the important question of housing the force under his command during an Afghan winter, which was fast approaching. "Some of the senior officers were in favour of quartering them in the Bala Hissar, as being the place with most prestige attached to it; but the fact that there was not accommodation in it for the whole force, and that, therefore, the troops would have to be separated, as well as the dangerous proximity of the huge store of gunpowder, which could only be got rid of by degrees, decided me to occupy in preference the partly fortified cantonment of Sherpur, about a mile north-east of the city, and close to the ruins of the old British entrenchment. It was enclosed on three sides by a high and massive loop-holed wall, and on the fourth by the Bimaru Heights, while it possessed the advantage of having within its walls sufficient shelter in long ranges of brick buildings for the British troops, and good hospital accommodation, and there was ample space for the erection of huts for the native soldiers." The drawback was, as Roberts states, that the great extent

of its perimeter, more than four and a half miles, made it a very difficult place to defend. On the 1st of November the headquarters of the general and the 1st Division moved into Sherpur. Meanwhile General Hugh Gough was dispatched with a column to escort to Kabul the small garrison on the crest of the Shutargardan, which, ever since Roberts's advance, had been threatened by a considerable gathering of the tribes. On the 18th of October some 17,000 Ghilzais had pushed to within 300 yards of our post pickets, cut off the water supply, and kept up an incessant fire on the camp. The next day a glance around the hills showed that the position was critical. At a moment the heliograph was seen flashing at Kushi, and Money, the gallant commander, knew that a relieving force was at hand. He at once took the offensive with vigour, and before evening not a man was to be seen on the hill. On the 20th, Gough and his men "arrived in a blinding snowstorm, and were greeted with hearty cheers." * On the 30th of October, Gough evacuated Kushi, and, accompanied by the 3rd Sikhs and four guns of the 1st Mountain Battery, and also the headquarters and three squadrons of the 9th Lancers, who had come from Ali Khel, started on his return march to Kabul.† On approaching the city on the 4th of November he was met by General Roberts, who expressed to Money, the 3rd Sikhs, and the Mountain Battery his admiration of their gallant conduct.

As the line of communication by the Shutargardan was closed for the winter, it was necessary that the line of communication by the Khyber-Jellalabad route should be opened as soon as possible. On the 26th of November, Roberts visited Butkhak, about eleven miles from Kabul, and selected a

* "Old Memories," by Sir Hugh Gough, *Pall Mall Magazine*, vol. xvii.

† "Official History," p. 236.

position there for an outpost in the direction of the line of advance of the Khyber column, which, under the command of Major Bright, had entered Jellalabad. On the 1st of November, Brigadier-General Macpherson proceeded with a brigade of about 1,800 men and four guns to Butkhak, and on the following day he was joined by Sir Frederick Roberts, who, with a strong escort, reconnoitred the Lataband Pass. The next morning, accompanied by several Ghilzais, he made a thorough examination of the Khurd-Kabul route, threading the gloomy defile where about 500 of our soldiers and over 2,500 followers perished on the 7th of January, 1842.* Roberts returned to Sherpur that evening, having ridden forty miles during the day. He decided on using the Lataband route as the main line of communication with the Khyber and India; a post was established on the Lataband Kotal, and the 23rd Pioneers and Sappers were immediately set to work to improve the road and extend the telegraph line. Roberts was now given the local rank of Lieutenant-General with the command of the two divisions in Eastern Afghanistan from Kabul to Jamrood inclusive.

On the same day that Roberts established an outpost at Butkhak, a dispatch from the Government of India reached him accepting the abdication of Amir Yakub Khan. On the 28th of October the general issued a proclamation announcing "that the Amir, having by his own free will abdicated, has left Afghanistan without a Government." "The British Government," the proclamation continued, "now commands that all Afghan authorities, Chiefs, and Sirdars do continue their functions in maintaining order, referring to me whenever necessary. The British Government desires that the people shall be treated with justice and benevolence, and that their

* "Life of Field-Marshal Sir Neville Chamberlain," by G. W. Forrest, C.I.E., p. 96.

religious feelings and customs be respected. . . . The British Government, after consultation with the principal Sirdars, tribal Chiefs, and others representing the interests and wishes of the various provinces and cities, will declare its will as to the future permanent arrangements to be made for the good government of the people."

The policy announced in the proclamation was a weak, makeshift policy. It was not the policy of the Indian Government, but of the British Ministry. The Afghans expected that we should punish Kabul for the murder of Cavagnari, as we punished it for the assassination of a previous envoy. On the 12th of October, 1843, the British soldiers saw, as they left the ruins of the capital, "the whole face of the sky red with flames. It was the stern justice of revenge." But the Government now determined not to punish the guilty city, but only those who had taken part in the attack on the Residency and the murder of a British envoy and his suite. A military commission was appointed, consisting of General Roberts, Chief of Staff, Colonel C. M. Macgregor, C.B., C.S.I., Surgeon-Major Bellew, C.S.I.—both well acquainted with Afghans—and Mahomed Hyat Khan, a high native official, who was an excellent Persian and Pushtu scholar. They were to inquire into the circumstances attending the attack on the Residency and the massacre of the envoy and his suite, and they were to submit recommendations regarding the punishment to be inflicted on all persons whom they found guilty of participation in the attack on the Residency. The actual trial of the prisoners was conducted by a Military Court, with Brigadier-General Massy as President. Each case was tried separately, and numerous witnesses examined. Eighty-nine prisoners in all were tried, of whom forty-nine, who were proved to have taken an active part in the massacre, were executed. On the 11th of November, General Roberts pro-

claimed an amnesty in favour of all who had fought against the British troops since the 3rd of September, on condition that they should surrender their arms and return to their homes, but exempted from the benefit were all concerned in the attack on the Residency.

On the 7th of November, Sir Frederick Roberts wrote to the Government of India that certain evidence had lately been brought before the Inquiry Commission "which tended to prove Yakub Khan guilty of culpable weakness and neglect." * The ex-Amir had been practically under no restraint, but the general was now "confidently assured that an escape would be shortly attempted," and effectual means were therefore taken to prevent it. On the 29th of November, General Roberts received orders for the immediate deportation of the Amir. On the following morning, after wishing farewell to the general and his staff, the Amir left the British camp, escorted by a squadron of the 9th Lancers and another of the 5th Punjab Cavalry. Four body-servants and faithful attendants accompanied him into exile.

The deportation of the Amir and his leading ministers, and the proclamation, convinced the chiefs and sirdars that the British had this time no intention of leaving Afghanistan. The time had come to do what their forefathers had done—compel the presumptuous invaders, who were attempting to govern it, to abandon it. The slaughter of the British soldiers in 1842 had not been forgotten. The people were told that, by a sudden and simultaneous rising, they could again drive a small English force from a cantonment. To the influence of patriotism was added the influence of fanatical zeal. In the mosque of every city and village a *jehad,* or holy

* From Major-General Sir Frederick Roberts, K.C.B., V.C., Commanding Kabul Expeditionary Force, to A. C. Lyall, Esq., C.B., Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department.

war, was proclaimed against the infidel, and religious passion and wrath inspired thousands of stern fanatics. In December tidings of general disaffection among the tribes began to reach the invaders, and to check the growing discontent a grand review of all the troops at Kabul was held on the 9th. The same afternoon a brigade was sent due west to Arghandeh to drive back the Afghan general, Mahomed Jan, who was reported to be attempting a junction with the Kohistanis, from the north. On the next day General Baker's brigade marched south to Charasia. General Massy was told "that he was to advance cautiously and quietly by the road leading directly from the city of Kabul towards Arghandeh, feeling for the enemy; that he was to communicate with Macpherson, and act in conformity with that officer's movements; and I impressed upon him that he was on no account to commit himself to an action until Macpherson had engaged the enemy." General Massy, Lord Roberts states, did not follow the route he was told to take, and, marching straight across the country, he found himself face to face with the enemy before he could join Macpherson. General Roberts, warned by the firing that an engagement was taking place, galloped across the Chardeh Valley, and, on gaining the open ground beyond the village of Bhagwana, he saw that "an unbroken line, extending for about two miles, and formed of not less than between 9,000 and 10,000 men, was moving rapidly towards me, all on foot, save a small body of cavalry on their left flank—in fact, the greater part of Mahomed Jan's army. To meet this formidable array, instead of Macpherson's and Massy's force, which I hoped I should have found combined, there were but four guns, 198 of the 9th Lancers under Lieutenant-Colonel Cleland, 40 of the 14th Bengal Lancers under Captain Philip Neville, and at some little distance Gough's troops of the 9th Lancers, who were engaged in watching the enemy's cavalry."

FLIGHT OF THE AFGHANS INTO THE HARRIAB VALLEY AFTER THEIR DEFEAT AT THE PEIWAR KOTAL

From a Drawing by Captain Colquhoun

MOUNTAIN BATTERY DESCENDING THE SPINGAWAI PASS, NOVEMBER 12, 1879

From a Photograph by Bourne and Shepherd

Roberts, to save his guns, ordered the cavalry to charge. "But the ground, terraced for irrigation purposes and intercepted by dykes, so impeded our cavalry that the charge, heroic as it was, made little or no impression upon the overwhelming number of the enemy, now flushed with the triumph of having made our guns retire."

To assist the cavalry, Roberts ordered two of the guns to halt and come into action while the other two continued to retire. They had not gone far when one of them fell into a deep, narrow channel and had to be spiked and abandoned. The three remaining guns took up positions near the village of Bhagwana, and opened fire from behind a low wall which surrounded the houses. But the Afghans pressed on, and the ammunition being nearly expended, the gunners again fell back. At the other side of the village they were stopped "by a ditch fully twelve feet deep, narrowing towards the bottom." The first gun was being taken across when a wheeler stumbled, and gun, men, and horses were in the ditch. A few hundred yards away were the Afghans, and the villagers began to fire from the roofs of the houses. Here was a critical moment. Roberts ordered the 9th Lancers to make another charge. It was gallantly done, but with exhausted troops and exhausted horses it could produce no results. The guns had to be spiked and abandoned. The cavalry retired slowly, with great steadiness, by alternate squadrons, in the direction of the Deg-i-Mahan defiles through the hills immediately overhanging Kabul city. Roberts had sent for 200 men of the 72nd, from Sherpur, to hold the gorge, and it was of vital importance to keep the enemy back till they reached it. From Bhagwana to Deg-i-Mahan was three miles. The Afghans pressed forward to the fight, while the dismounted troopers of the 9th Lancers and the 12th Lancers and the gunners, standing up manfully, sent volleys into the approaching masses. Gradually their

numbers began to diminish, and the attack became less severe. Macpherson, on hearing the sound of the guns on his left, had pushed on to the Kabul road, and his advance-guard had engaged the rear portion of the Afghan army. Then a loud cheer arose from the Lancers as the Highlanders, led by Brownlow, were seen advancing at the double through the gorge. "It was literally touch and go who should reach the village first, but the Highlanders swept in, and, swarming to the tops of the houses, the breechloaders soon checked the advancing tide." The Afghans, led by some *ghazis*, streamed down upon the village "like ants on a hill"; but, wrapped in the steady fire poured upon them, they could not live. They broke and fell back in confusion. Their entrance into Kabul had been checked, but their standards floated on the hills around. Sir Frederick Roberts waited at Deg-i-Mahan till Macpherson arrived, and did not reach Sherpur till long after dark.

Bad success in war, as William Napier has said, produces much discussion. The conception of the operations around Sherpur has been criticised, but on one point the verdict has been unanimous. The comrades who rode by his side bear marked testimony to the cool courage and judgment of the commander in the handling of overmatched troops in a perilous predicament. The general gives unqualified praise to the steadiness and coolness of the squadron of the 14th Bengal Cavalry, under Captain Neville, during the retirement, to the gallantry of Lieutenants M'Innes and Tower, 9th Lancers, to the devoted bravery shown by the Rev. J. W. Adams, which he personally witnessed. In his dispatch Sir Frederick Roberts writes: "Mr. Adams dismounted to assist a wounded man of the 9th Lancers, and while so occupied lost his horse; when making his way back on foot, and although the enemy were but a few yards distant from him, Mr. Adams, regardless of his own safety, was mainly instrumental in saving the lives of two men of

the 9th Lancers who were caught under their horses, which had fallen in a watercourse, and who but for his aid must have been speedily killed by the advancing enemy." For these two deeds of valour Adams was awarded the Victoria Cross, being the first clergyman who won that coveted decoration. Sir Frederick himself nearly lost his life in performing a similar act of bravery and mercy. "I was endeavouring to help some men out of the ditch when the headman of the village rushed at me with his knife, seeing which a Mohammedan of the 18th Bengal Cavalry, who was following me on foot, having just had his horse shot under him, sprang at my assailant and, seizing him round the waist, threw him to the bottom of the ditch, thereby saving my life."

General Roberts resolved the next day to dislodge the enemy from the heights above Kabul. Their most formidable position was on the crest of the Takht-i-Shah. The slopes leading up to it were covered with huge masses of jagged rock, intersected by perpendicular cliffs, and their natural great strength was increased by breastworks and stockades thrown up on different points. After gallant attempts had been made during the greater part of the day to carry it, Roberts ordered the assault to be deferred till the following morning, when the arrival of Baker would enable him to assist the direct attack by a flanking movement. The next morning (December 13), under cover of artillery fire, the 92nd, supported by the Guides, rushed up the steep slopes. They were met by a furious onslaught, and a desperate conflict took place. The leading officer, Lieutenant Forbes, a lad of great promise, was killed, and Colour-Sergeant Drummond fell by his side. For a moment even the brave Highlanders were staggered by the numbers and fury of their antagonists, but only for a moment. Lieutenant Dick-Cunyngham sprang forward to cheer them on, and confidence was restored. With a wild shriek the Highlanders

threw themselves on the Afghans, and quickly succeeded in driving them down the farther side of the ridge.

The next day revealed that Roberts was not fighting a gathering of hostile tribes, but a well-organised rebellion. He was therefore reluctantly compelled to evacuate all his isolated positions and to withdraw his force to his cantonments at Sherpur, where he was compelled with 5,000 men to defend a position nearly five miles long, some two miles of which had no further protection than a slight, shallow trench, hastily constructed at a critical moment. If our troops had been systematically assailed they would have found it extremely difficult to hold their own inside the immense enclosure to which they had been committed. The enemy, however, did nothing but indulge in firing of a desultory kind, until they heard that General Charles Gough, with reinforcements, was approaching, and then they delivered their one real attack. On the morning of the 23rd December the signal-fire was lighted on the Asmai Heights. As it died out a brisk fire was opened upon the south-west angle of the camp. This, however, was only a feint. Led by their *ghazis*, the main body of Afghans, wearing swords and knives, and shouting their war-cry, advanced on the north-east angle. As they came on the bullets fell thick on the besieged, but our soldiers patiently and silently waited the order to fire. When the enemy arrived within a few yards of the wall a sustained and well-directed volley struck the head of the Afghan host. The dead and wounded filled the trench; the survivors took shelter behind walls and trees, from which they commenced a fusillade which did but little damage. Once again did a few fanatics attempt to face the murderous fire from our ramparts, but even fanatical zeal could not nerve them to endure it. Then news reached the Afghans of Gough's reinforcing column; and the counter-stroke delivered by General Roberts, when he ordered all the available cavalry in camp to advance and

attack them in flank, turned the besiegers into a mob of fugitives.

Thus ended the investment of Sherpur. The next day the enemy disappeared, and our troops were again in Kabul. During the winter months tranquillity was restored around the capital, communications with India were reopened, and our position was strengthened. But Lord Lytton's Government had no desire now to keep an army at Kabul, which had proved a difficult and costly task. "The basis on which we have now deliberately settled our present Afghan policy," wrote Lord Lytton to the Secretary of State, "is the disintegration of the late Afghan kingdom." The Viceroy wanted to discover a capable and friendly Amir to whom he might hand over the government of Northern Afghanistan; and he determined to detach permanently the province of Kandahar from Kabul, and make it a distinct state ruled by an Afghan sirdar, Shere Ali, under the protection and with the support of British troops.

CHAPTER VI

THE MARCH FROM KABUL TO KANDAHAR

On the 31st of March, 1880, Sir Donald Stewart, who had commanded at Kandahar since its occupation in 1879, having handed over the government of Kandahar to Shere Ali and the command of the troops to General Primrose, who was appointed to command the 1st Bombay Division, started for Kabul. Two long marches from the fortress of Ghazni, Donald Stewart found, on the 19th of April, the enemy drawn up on a low range of hills through which passes the road to Ghazni. Donald Stewart determined to force his way. He knew that if he stopped to disperse every body of Afghans that gathered on the hills that lined his route, Kabul would never be reached in any reasonable time. He therefore continued his march till the head of the column was within three miles of the enemy; then he began to make his arrangements for the impending battle. Before he completed them, the whole upper range, for a distance of two miles, was seen to be swarming with the enemy, and a large body of horsemen threatened our left. Our guns had scarcely opened fire when a torrent of men poured forth from the slopes, and, breaking against our line, spread out right and left and enveloped it. The fanatics charged with the same desperate valour as the followers of "the man of Mecca" did when they broke the ranks of the Roman Legion. Beaten back by our force, they returned again and again to the attack. After an hour's desperate fighting, our reinforcements and the heavy artillery

came up, and the enemy, finding all assaults hopeless, spread broadcast over the country. Ghazni surrendered without a struggle, and the road to the capital of Afghanistan lay open. General Roberts had sent from Kabul a force to co-operate with Stewart's column, and on the 27th the two forces joined. On the 1st of May, Donald Stewart entered in his diary: "Argandeh, 1st May. Marched about three miles beyond the regular stage. Bobs came out to see me, looking very jolly and well." On the following day Sir Donald Stewart arrived at Kabul, and assumed the chief command as well as political control.

Donald Stewart was sorely distressed that, owing to his being a general many years senior to Roberts, he had to supersede him in the supreme command of the forces he had led to victory. But the two men were old friends, and they possessed those virtues which a soldier should possess—they were brave and true. Donald Stewart wrote to his wife: "He (Roberts) is very true to me, and is of great use to me in many ways, and, if there is to be fighting, he will be my right hand." Roberts retained the command of the two divisions at Kabul, and his first endeavour was, by improving the transport, to render them thoroughly efficient and mobile for any service they might be called upon to perform. On the 7th of May, Donald Stewart enters in his diary: "Arranged that Bobs is to take a column round the Logar and the Maidan, chiefly for the collection of supplies." On the 27th of May, Donald Stewart wrote to his wife: "Bobs, who has been marching about the country for the last twenty days, comes back to Kabul to-morrow. He is rather in a state of mind about his future, because he will have no appointment when this force returns to India.

"There is no telling what may happen after Lord Lytton goes. It will be a great shame if they don't do something

for Bobs . . . . there can be no doubt about his military capacity. He has done great service here, taking it at the estimate of those who are least friendly to him; and it will be an infamous shame if any petty feeling of jealousy is allowed to stand in his way." The time was at hand when "Bobs" was to render another great service to his country.

When Donald Stewart assumed the direction of affairs at Kabul, he found that Lord Lytton had, through Lepel Griffin—a most able member of the Bengal Civil Service—entered into communication with Sirdar Abdurrahman, a grandson of the great Amir Dost Mohammed. This prince had been driven into exile by his uncle, the late Amir Shere Ali, and had spent the last ten years in Russian Turkestan. In February, 1880, information reached Kabul that Abdurrahman had, with the approval of the Russians, crossed the frontier, and arrived in Badakhshan with a force of about 3,000 men. On the 1st of April Mr. Lepel Griffin sent a letter to him by a confidential native messenger, "in order that you may submit to the British officers at Kabul any representations that you may desire to the British Government with regard to your object in entering Afghanistan." The Amir replied: "My only intention in doing so was to help my nation in much perplexity and trouble." *

A month after the first conciliatory message had been sent to Abdurrahman, it was known at Kabul that the Viceroyalty of Lord Lytton, which had started with bright promises, was about to perish in a too ambitious dream. A strong Liberal majority had been returned; Mr. Gladstone, who had virulently opposed the war, had become chief Minister of the Crown; Lord Lytton had telegraphed his resignation, and the Marquis of Ripon had been appointed to succeed him. On the 8th of June, Lord Ripon arrived at Simla, and assumed

* "The Life of Abdur Rahman," vol. i., p. 192.

charge of the Government. The new Governor-General was anxious that Afghanistan "should get the best ruler it can," and he considered "as matters stood an arrangement with Abdurrahman offered the most advisable solution." But Lord Ripon was not prepared to allow Abdurrahman to trifle with him. On the 30th of June, Donald Stewart wrote: "We have at last got final orders about Abdurrahman. I am to send him a letter to-morrow morning, requesting him to come in, and if he does not do so, I am to assemble all the chiefs of Afghanistan, and leave them to settle the matter for themselves. This will bring things to a crisis one way or another, so you will know in ten days or so from this what our prospects are. Two days before, Abdurrahman had started for Kohistan. He crossed the Hindu Kush, and on the 20th of July arrived at Charekar, the capital of Kohistan, whose forts had been destroyed by the British in the first Afghan War. On the 2nd of July a durbar was held. Three large tents were pitched within the cantonment, about 150 yards from the Headquarters Gate. "Facing Bemaru Heights was the largest of all, towering above its near neighbours, which again dwarfed the durbar tent proper, an old weather-beaten canvas affair, dull red in colour, once the property of the Amir." All the afternoon, sirdars, chiefs and maleks came, with their retainers pouring into the cantonment. About half-past four o'clock the guard of honour furnished by the 72nd Highlanders fell in, and "to the cheery quick-step of 'Scotland Yet!'" marched to the northernmost tent and formed up at the entrance. At 5, Sir Donald Stewart, accompanied by Sir Frederick Roberts and Mr. Griffin, arrived, and after the usual ceremonies the durbar was opened with a brief address by Sir Donald Stewart, "advising them all to assist the new ruler in restoring peace and quietness throughout the country, and to lay aside private quarrels and unite in this very desirable object." Mr. Lepel

Griffin then announced in Persian the recognition of Abdurrahman by the "Viceroy of India and the Government of Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen Empress," and he intimated that the British armies would shortly withdraw from Afghanistan.

All arrangements for withdrawal had been commenced, and it was determined that the Kabul force should return to India in two separate bodies and by two distinct routes. Sir Donald Stewart was to withdraw a column by the Khyber route, and Sir Frederick Roberts by the Kuram route. Before leaving Afghanistan, Roberts was anxious to get some knowledge of the Khyber route. He rode out from Gundamak, and from thence proceeded to Jellalabad. "My intention, when I left Kabul, was to ride as far as the Khyber Pass, but suddenly a presentiment, which I have never been able to explain to myself, made me retrace my steps, and hurry back towards Kabul—a presentiment of coming trouble, which I can only characterise as instinctive." About half-way between Butkhak and Kabul, Roberts was met by Sir Donald Stewart, who brought him the grave news of the overwhelming disaster at Maiwand.

"Lord Ripon had been Viceroy but a few weeks when it was known that Ayub Khan, the brother of Yakub Khan, was marching on Kandahar. The Viceroy and his advisers at Simla do not seem to have been aware of the strength of Ayub's force or the gravity of the situation. They sent the troops of the Wali with a small British force, under General Burrows, to meet him. The troops of the Wali mutinied, and although the mutineers were to some extent punished by General Burrows, the greater part succeeded in joining Ayub. General Burrows had received stringent orders from the supreme Government that he was to intercept Ayub's advance to Ghazni, and on the 27th July, hearing that he was on his

way to that fortress, he went out to meet him, and found himself in face of the Afghan army. If, with his tiny force of a little over two thousand men, he had at once attacked, he might have won the day. The history of nearly all our Indian battles is the history of a small force beating a much larger one. But this has only been done by our taking the initiative and attacking with our infantry. General Burrows, however, unfortunately entered into an artillery duel, which lasted two hours. During this time our cavalry and infantry were exposed to wholesale slaughter, and when a party of *ghazis* came up an unguarded ravine, the native infantry gave way, and the 66th were broken by the rush of sepoys upon them. The cavalry had been so demoralised and crippled by the artillery fire that they could not be got to charge, and a disastrous rout began. The splendid 66th upheld their country's honour, and one hundred officers and men made a desperate stand in a garden. They were surrounded by the whole Afghan army, and fought until only eleven men were left. The survivors charged out of the garden, and died with their faces to the foe, fighting to the death. Young Honywood, holding a colour high above his head, shouting, 'Men, what shall we do to save this?' will be a beacon to soldiers so long as heroic virtue is reverenced."

On the 30th of July, Sir Frederick Roberts telegraphed to the Adjutant-General at Simla urging that a force should be despatched at once from Kabul for the relief of Kandahar.* Roberts, before despatching the telegram, showed it to Stewart. On the 3rd of August the sanction of the Governor-General in Council was received, and Roberts set to work at once to organise the column. "In this most congenial duty I received every possible assistance and encouragement from

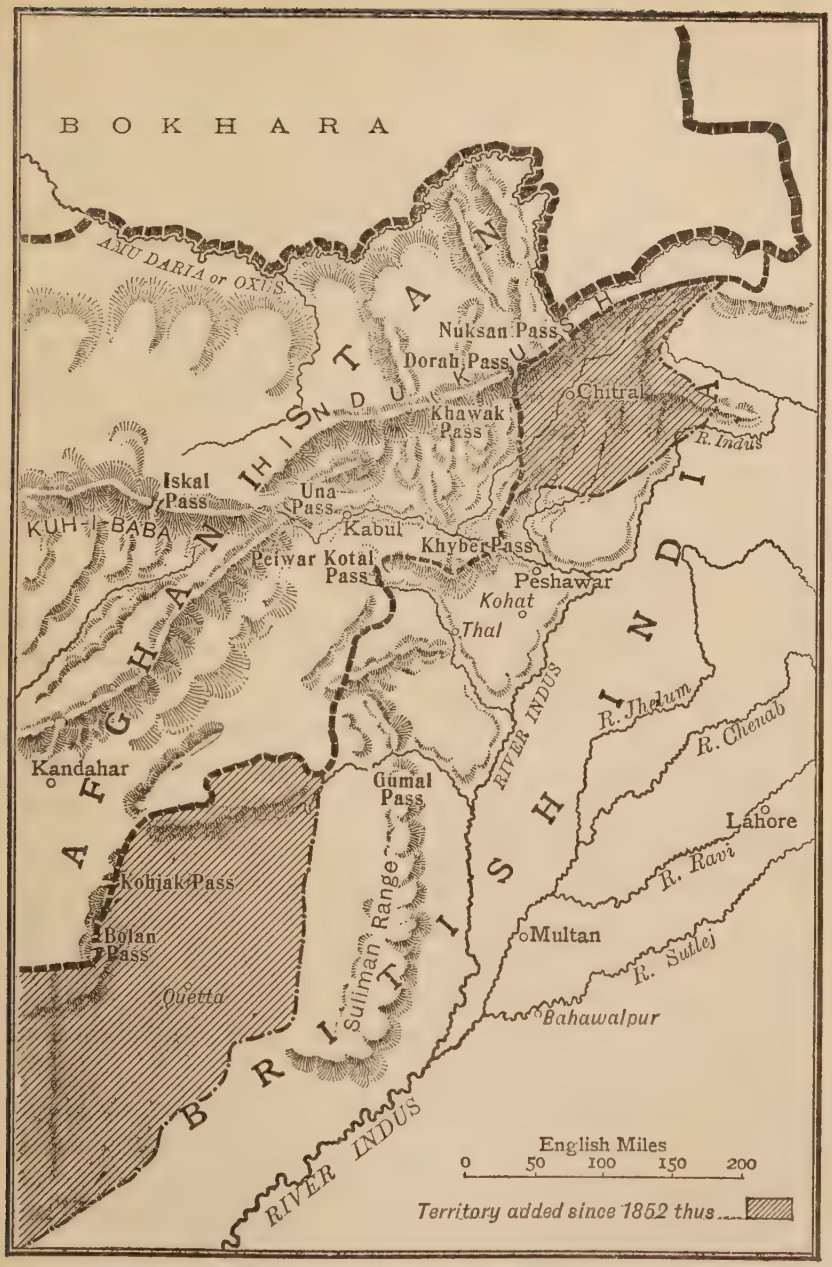
* Professor Rait ("Life of Sir F. Haines") states that the Government of India had already made the suggestion by telegram on July 28.

Stewart; he gave me *carte blanche,* and I should only have had myself to blame if every unit had not been as efficiently equipped as circumstances would admit." In reply to questions from Simla, the Viceroy was informed that Roberts would march on the 8th, and expected to reach Kandahar on the 2nd of September.

On Sunday, the 8th of August, Sir Frederick Roberts's force moved into camp by brigades. The cavalry brigade was in the open plain beyond the village of Charasia; the 2nd infantry brigade camped behind it, near Indikel, the headquarters and the 1st and 3rd brigades halted at Beni Hissar, five miles from Kabul, on the way to the Logar Valley. That evening Donald Stewart rode out to Beni Hissar, "to say good-bye to all friends," and was received with cheers by his old regiments of the Kandahar force. On the 11th of August, Sherpur was evacuated, and Donald Stewart, with masterly skill, marched the troops out of Afghanistan without firing a shot.

On the 9th of August the Kandahar-Kabul Field Force set forth towards Ghazni, marching by the Logar Valley. The next day Roberts watched the troops cross the Logar River, and "it was pleasant to notice that the men seemed in the best of spirits, doubling up the bank and hurrying along as if Kandahar were only ten miles away. One company of the 23rd Pioneers recognised the general, and raised the Sikh war-cry of '*Guru! Guru! Futteh Guru!*'"

On the 16th the march was resumed, and after a tramp of seventeen miles the camp was pitched at "a most desolate arid spot." "On the way we passed Ahmedkhel, where Sir Donald Stewart won his victory; the name had been changed by the natives to 'The Resting-place of Martyrs,' and the numerous freshly covered-in graves testified to the *ghazis'*



THE NORTH-WEST FRONTIER AND AFGHANISTAN

The shaded portion indicates territory added to British India during Lord Roberts's "Forty-one Years"

heavy losses. The remains of the few British soldiers, who had been buried where they had fallen, had been desecrated, and the bones were exposed to view and scattered about." * The next day the troops, after a march of sixteen miles, halted at Chardeh, a group of small villages. Soon after General Roberts arrived there a native messenger brought him a communication from Colonel Tanner, commanding at Kelat-i-Ghilzai. "It was dated the 12th of August, and informed me that Kandahar was closely invested, but that the garrison had supplies for two months and forage for fifteen days." Many a mile had to be traversed before Kandahar was reached.

"Each march now seemed hotter and more wearisome, for we were descending some hundred feet. Very little water was found on the way." † The troops suffered much, but they pushed forward. On the 20th they covered a distance of twenty miles, the longest march made. On the morning of the 23rd of August the fortress of Kelat-i-Ghilzai, "built on an almost perpendicular hill at least 200 feet high, was sighted, and the camp was pitched on a dry sandy plain on the south side of the fort. Here Roberts halted for a day to rest his men and wearied transport animals. From the time they left Ghazni they had marched 136 miles in eight days. "This gives the wonderful average of seventeen miles a day. The distance actually traversed is really greater if all the ups and downs and detours are taken into account." ‡

Roberts determined to withdraw the small force from Kelat-i-Ghilzai, and take them along with him. On the 25th the troops were once more on the move, and on the following day, having covered thirty-four miles, they reached Tirandez. "The

* "Forty-One Years in India," vol. ii., pp. 350, 351.

† "The Cabul Campaign," by J. Duke, p. 349. ‡ *Ibid.*, p. 355.

heat was very severe, and the sun more powerful than ever, but the infantry marched along splendidly. . . . By midday the sun poured down on us most fiercely while waiting for the tents, and we made the best shelter we could by throwing our greatcoats over the small scrub growing in the sand." At Tirandez, Roberts received a letter from Primrose announcing that Ayub Khan had withdrawn from his investment of Kandahar, and was entrenching himself at the village of Mazra beyond the Baba Wali Kotal, in the Arghandab Valley, due north of Kandahar. General Roberts now directed General Hugh Gough to proceed with the 3rd Bengal and the 3rd Punjab Cavalry to Robat, thirty-four and a half miles distant, in order to open direct communication with Kandahar by heliograph. Soon after midnight both regiments moved quietly from the camp, and about noon they reached Robat, a clump of small villages seventeen miles from Kandahar. Gough at once despatched a message: "After about half an hour's patient waiting we saw a dim flash, a curious smoky sort of light (caused, I suppose, by the sandy atmosphere all round) which, with difficulty, we deciphered as 'Who are you?' The prompt reply was, 'The advance-guard of General Roberts's force—General Gough, with two regiments of cavalry.'"

The following day the column marched into camp at Robat, "and to the great grief of all our general was carried in a doolie very ill with fever and terribly pulled down." His forced strenuous march from Kabul to Kandahar had been practically and successfully accomplished. He had in nineteen days, with a single day's rest, marched a regular force of 10,000 men, encumbered with 8,000 to 9,000 baggage animals, three hundred miles through the heart of a barren hostile country, surrounded by bleak and lonely mountains. Such a feat will always be remembered. The accomplishment was due

to thorough organisation, and the steady energy on a march that discipline always creates. An officer, who accompanied his regiment, wrote: "I consider it was simply the pluck of the men inspired by the general's presence and encouragement that pulled the force through." *

General Roberts, realising how undesirable it is to fight a battle with tired men, halted on the 29th, and the following day the troops marched only a short distance of eight miles. On the morning of the 31st, the Kandahar Field Force marched into Kandahar. Some distance from the town Sir Frederick though extremely weak, left the doolie and mounted his horse, to meet General Primrose and his officers, who came out to receive the column. The troops halted and breakfasted outside the south wall of the city, sheltered from the enemy's fire. They then took up their positions from the abandoned cantonments on the north-west of the city to old Kandahar on the left. The 2nd Brigade† was on the right, camped in

* *The Times* correspondent, General Sir J. Luther Vaughan, wrote from Robat: "Let me once more place upon record my belief that in General Roberts the British Army has a general of whom it may well be proud and on whom it may confidently rely come what may. While full of enterprise and adventure, he is prudent and calculating, and when once his mind is made up, his resolution is carried almost to the verge of obstinacy. More than this, he possesses the affection and full confidence of all officers and soldiers serving under him. How he has made himself master of the former will be readily understood by those who know his constant thought for the comfort and welfare of the soldiers serving under him, and have marked the patience and self-denial with which at the end of the longest and hottest march and with a thousand matters pressing on his attention, he will ride back for miles to meet and cheer by the announcement that camp is near the weary and struggling soldiers."

† 2ND BRIGADE, commanded by General Baker.

No. 2 Mountain Battery (six guns)	200	officers	and men
72nd Highlanders	561	,,	,,
2nd Sikhs	495	,,	,,
3rd Sikhs	441	,,	,,
5th Gurkhas	477	,,	,,
2nd Beluchis	444	,,	,,
Total strength	2,618		

rear of a detached ridge, known as Picquet Hill; in the centre was the 1st Brigade,* screened in its front by another hill called Karez Hill, and in rear of the most western point of Karez Hill, among orchards and enclosures, was the 3rd Brigade (General Macgregor's).† Beyond this ridge a long, precipitous spur separates the Arghandab Valley on the north-west from the Kandahar plain. The position occupied by Ayub Khan extended for a mile and a half from the south-western portion of the ridge, known as the Paimal Hill, to an easy pass known as the Baba Wali Kotal, about three miles from the north-western bastion of the city. Over the Baba Wali ran the road to the village where Ayub Khan's main camp was pitched. Sir Frederick Roberts, after a cursory examination of the ground, decided that a direct attack on the Baba Wali would involve heavy loss, and he resolved to turn it. "But before I could decide how this could best be done, it was necessary to ascertain the strength and precise extent of the Afghan position." He therefore ordered General Hugh Gough, with two guns 11/9 R.A. (Mountain Battery), the 3rd Bengal Cavalry, and the 15th Sikhs to make a reconnaissance. Colonel Chapman, Chief of the Staff, accompanied

* 1ST BRIGADE, commanded by General Macpherson.

9-8, Royal Artillery (six screw guns)	218	officers	and men
92nd Highlanders	501	,,	,,
2nd Gurkhas	411	,,	,,
23rd Pioneers	600	,,	,,
24th Punjab Infantry	361	,,	,,
Total strength	2,091		

† 3RD BRIGADE, commanded by General Macgregor.

11-9, Royal Artillery, Mountain Battery (six guns)	126	officers	and men
2-60th Rifles	517	,,	,,
4th Gurkhas	516	,,	,,
15th Sikhs	498	,,	,,
25th Punjab Infantry	526	,,	,,
Total strength	2,183		

the party, his intimate knowledge of the country being of great service."* Gough secured "a very advantageous position on some mounds overlooking the village of Gundigan, and determined to hold it whilst he sent forward Colonel A. Mackenzie, with the 3rd Cavalry, to obtain fuller information. Mackenzie, avoiding the numerous orchards and enclosures, penetrated to within the village of Pir Paimal, which he found to be strongly entrenched. As soon as Mackenzie had drawn on himself the attention of the enemy, "who advanced with heavy musketry fire (under cover of orchards and villages with which the country was thickly intersected), he leisurely withdrew the cavalry in perfect order." Two companies of the Sikhs were thrown forward to cover the withdrawal while the two mountain guns were brought into action. As soon as the cavalry had passed in rear of the line of pickets, the guns and infantry retired, hard pressed by great masses of the enemy. But camp was reached with very small loss. "Had it not been for the great steadiness of the 15th Sikhs,† who behaved splendidly, it must have been greater."

The information brought in by the reconnaissance decided General Roberts to turn the Afghan right, and to attack on the following morning. Before dawn on the 1st of September the troops were under arms, and at 6 A.M. Roberts explained personally to the officers commanding divisions and brigades his dispositions. "Briefly, it was to threaten the enemy's left (the Baba Wali Kotal), and to attack in force by the village of Pir Paimal." About 9.30 A.M. the forty-pounders opened fire on the Baba Wali Kotal, and the advance by the brigades

* "Old Memories," by Sir Hugh Gough, *Pall Mall Magazine*, vol. xvii., p. 541.

† They were under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Hennessey, a very brave and able soldier.

began. Two batteries on a low mound between the Karez Hill and the Pir Paimal proceeded to shell the village of Mulla Sahibdad, which the enemy had occupied the previous night, and under cover of it Macpherson's brigade advanced, the 2nd Gurkhas and the 72nd Highlanders being in the first line. It was carried at the point of the bayonet after a stubborn resistance. The village was full of fanatical *ghazis,* who sold their lives dearly, and continued to fire on the assailants from houses and cellars after the streets had been cleared. The 92nd lost several men killed and wounded. "Lieutenant Menzies had a narrow escape. After he had been wounded, he was placed in an empty room, for the sake of shade and comfort, when a *ghazi,* hidden in an inner room, rushed out, cut down one of the guard, and slashed Menzies over the head and back. The fanatic was killed before he could do any further mischief." Three hundred Afghans perished in the village.

While Macpherson was advancing on Sahibdad, Baker's brigade advanced against the village of Gundigan, keeping in touch as far as possible with the 1st Brigade. The Afghans were posted in orchards with loopholed walls, from whence they sent a smiting fire. But they were taken by storm, and the brigade pushed on, the leading regiments being the 72nd and the 5th Sikhs. The left wing of the Highlanders, under Major Guinness, and the 5th Gurkhas, under Major FitzHugh, attacked and cleared the village of Gundigan. The right wing, under Major Stockwell, carried orchard after orchard which lay between the village and Sahibdad. In taking one of these orchards, the Highlanders came suddenly under a severe enfilading fire. Captain Frome and several men were shot down. A critical moment. Then Brownlow, their chief, came up on foot, and, ordering a rush forward to be made, he was struck in the neck by a bullet, and fell mortally wounded, a man

beloved by every soldier in the regiment.* The Highlanders made a rush, and the enclosure was cleared. So, fighting hard, the two regiments reached the open country. An Afghan battery near the extremity of the Pir Paimal spur opened fire upon them, and a large body of *ghazis* attempted to rush them. But they were repulsed with fixed bayonets.

The 92nd Highlanders and the Gurkhas were now in alignment with the right of General Baker's brigade, and the time had come to make the turning movement round the steep extremity of the Pir Paimal ridge. The two regiments swept round the ridge, and carried the village of Pir Paimal. On reaching the open ground in front of the village, Major G. White, who was leading the advance, found himself confronted by a mass of the enemy, and exposed to a heavy fire from guns posted behind a deep entrenchment to the south-west of the Baba Wali Kotal. Reinforcements were seen hurrying up from Ayub's camp, while the guns from the Baba Wali Kotal were reversed so as to increase the artillery fire. No moment for hesitation. General Macpherson ordered the position to be stormed. The Highlanders were lying under cover of a watercourse. Major White rode along its front, and called to his men: "Highlanders, will you follow me if I give you a lead for those guns?" There was but one answer—a ringing cheer—and the next moment the men were rushing across the open ground, led by the pipers playing the slogan, while Major White rode serenely on in front, drawing upon himself a terrific fire.† Covered by the fire of a field battery, and sup-

* "In him," wrote Sir Frederick Roberts, "the Army has experienced a great loss. He had on many occasions highly distinguished himself as a leader—at the Peiwar Kotal, during the operations around Kabul at the latter end of 1879, and, notably, on the 14th of December, when he won the admiration of the whole force by his brilliant conduct in the attack and capture of the Asmai Heights."

† "The Afghan War, 1879-80," by Howard Hensman, p. 518.

ported by a portion of the 2nd Gurkhas and 23rd Pioneers, the Highlanders drove the enemy from the entrenchments at the point of the bayonet. "The gallant and ever-foremost Major White," as Sir Frederick Roberts called him, was the first to reach the guns. He was closely followed by a Gurkha sepoy, who, placing his rifle upon one of them, exclaimed: "Captured in the name of the 2nd Prince of Wales's Gurkhas." *

In the morning General Roberts had moved his head-quarters to Karez Hill, and during the day he guided the operations by means of heliographic stations at various points. When he was assured that the turning movement was a complete success, and that there was no fear of counter-attack, he pushed on with the 3rd Brigade to join General Ross. On his arrival at Paimal village he found the battle had been won, and he rode into Ayub Khan's abandoned camp. "Utterly exhausted as I was from the hard day's work, and the weakening effects of my late illness, the cheers with which I was greeted by the troops as I rode into Ayub Khan's camp and viewed the dead bodies of my gallant soldiers nearly unmanned me, and it was with a very big lump in my throat that I managed to say a few words of thanks to each corps in turn. When I returned to Kandahar, and threw myself on the bed in the little room prepared for me, I was dead-beat, and quite unequal to the effort of reporting our success to the Queen or to the Viceroy." After an hour's rest, he "pulled himself together" and dispatched a telegram announcing the victory.

The state of Sir Frederick Roberts's health was now a cause

* Sir Frederick Roberts's dispatch. Mr. Hensman writes: "A story, which is well found if it be not true, is told of a Gurkha, who had attached himself all day to the Highlanders. He managed to reach one of the guns first, and leaping up on it he waved his cap and cried in Hindustani: 'This gun belongs to *my* regiment—2nd Gurkhas! Prince of Wales's!' Then he thrust his cap down the muzzle, in order that there might be no dispute as to future ownership."

of considerable anxiety. On the 6th of September, he wrote to the Marquis of Ripon: "As regards myself, I am anxious to leave Kandahar as soon as your lordship thinks I can be spared. The state of my health is far from satisfactory; with a short intermission, I have been on service for two years in an anxious and responsible position. It is nearly twelve years since I was last at home, and I feel that I need the complete rest and change which a year or so in England alone can give me." Four days later he telegraphed to the Adjutant-General:

"CHAMAN,

"*10th September*, 1880.

"Please inform the Commander-in-Chief that the state of my health necessitated my leaving Kandahar temporarily. I have passed the Medical Board, and the doctors urge my going home at once. Change to Pishin will no doubt be beneficial, and enable me to remain until October; but I shall esteem it a favour if His Excellency will arrange for my being relieved then, as I feel that I could not carry on this high and responsible command with satisfaction to myself. I much regret having to make this application so soon after His Excellency has been pleased to appoint me to the command of the troops in Southern Afghanistan, but my health has been failing for some time past.

"FRED. ROBERTS."

On the 16th of September he wrote to the Viceroy:

"CAMP GULISTAN KAREZ,

"*16th September*, 1880.

"MY LORD MARQUIS,—I omitted in my letter of yesterday to tell Your Excellency how gratified I am at having been created a G.C.B. by Her Majesty, and selected to succeed Sir

Neville Chamberlain as Commander-in-Chief of the Madras Army. I feel that I owe this appointment entirely to your kind interest in me, and I beg you will accept my sincere thanks. Such a high and honourable position would be highly prized by any officer, and I think myself most fortunate in obtaining it, the more especially as the honour was quite unexpected.

"I hope Major White will be at Simla in a day or two; he will be able to tell you all about the march from Kabul and the fight at Kandahar. Major White was, as usual, always foremost; he seems to have a charmed life. It was a great relief to me to be assured of his safety. He is one of the best officers I have ever met with, and I hope now he will obtain such rank as will make him eligible for a command when soldiers are next required for hard service.

"Will your Lordship allow me to congratulate you and the Government in having secured the services of Sir Donald Stewart as Member of Council? There is no one in India so well acquainted with the army generally, or so well fitted to be at the head of the Military Department.

"I remain, my Lord Marquis, yours very faithfully,

"FRED. ROBERTS."

On the 9th of October Sir Frederick Roberts wrote to the Duke of Cambridge: "Your Royal Highness's most gracious telegram of the 4th September and letter of the 7th idem reached me in due course. Pray allow me to offer my most respectful thanks for them, and for the kind congratulations therein contained.

"Your Royal Highness's cordial expressions of satisfaction on the success of our march from Kabul, and of our fight with Ayub Khan, were highly appreciated, not only by myself, but by the whole force. Soldiers value the approval of their Chief, and nothing pleased the Kabul-Kandahar troops more

than to learn that Her Majesty the Queen and you, sir, were satisfied with the manner in which they did their work.

"I personally am much gratified that Your Royal Highness should consider the conduct of the march from Kabul, and of the subsequent operations around Kandahar, worthy of commendation. With such superb troops, and such able, experienced commanders, it would have been my fault had anything gone wrong."

Three days later General Roberts left Quetta for India.

"Riding through the Bolan Pass, I overtook most of the regiments of the Kabul-Kandahar Field Force marching towards Sibi, thence to disperse to their respective destinations. As I parted with each corps in turn its band played 'Auld Lang Syne,' and I have never since heard that memory-stirring air without its bringing before my mind's eye the last view I had of the Kabul-Kandahar Field Force. I fancy myself crossing and recrossing the river which winds through the pass; I hear the martial beat of drums and plaintive music of the pipes; and I see riflemen and Gurkhas, Highlanders and Sikhs, guns and horses, camels and mules, with the endless following of an Indian army, winding through the narrow gorges, or over the interminable boulders which made the passage of the Bolan so difficult and wearisome to man and beast."

In November Sir Frederick Roberts returned to England, and "was fêted and feasted to almost an alarming extent."

In 1881 he went to the Cape of Good Hope, having been nominated by Gladstone's Government Governor of Natal and Commander of the Forces in South Africa on the death of Sir George Colley and the receipt of the news of the disaster at Majuba Hill.

"While I was on my way out to take up my command, peace was made with the Boers in the most marvellously rapid and unexpected manner. A peace, alas! 'without honour,' to

which may be attributed the recent regrettable state of affairs in the Transvaal—a state of affairs which was foreseen and predicted by many at the time. My stay at Cape Town was limited to twenty-four hours, the Government being apparently as anxious to get me away from Africa as they had been to hurry me out there."

CHAPTER VII

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE INDIAN ARMY

On the 27th of November, 1881, Sir Frederick Roberts returned to India as Commander-in-Chief of the Madras Army. The long campaign in Afghanistan had laid bare the deficiencies in our military system, and Lord Roberts had gained on battlefields a knowledge of the defects of troops who had not been sufficiently trained. Since the Mutiny the scene of the majority of the campaigns had been our northern frontier, and the officers and men of the Presidency armies had been afforded little opportunity of learning the business of war. When Lord Roberts assumed command at Madras he found military education and attention to the details of the profession were not very common, and he proceeded at once to train his soldiers. Though he was convinced that, in order to resist extraneous aggression, it was necessary to gather fighting material from the fighting races of Northern India, he did not fail to recognise the good qualities of the Madras sepoy. He found him as a rule more intelligent and better educated than the northern sepoy, and he realised, before the Russo-Japanese War, that an intelligent, robust and brave Oriental, though short of stature and not pleasing to the critical military eye on parade, could, by a careful system of musketry training, be converted into an efficient and formidable soldier. In order to teach the Madras sepoys the value of musketry, and make them excel in it, Lord Roberts encouraged rifle meetings, and to render them popular with men and officers he showed himself as a competitor. "I

took to rifle-shooting myself (he says), as did the officers on my personal staff, who were all good shots, and our team held its own in many exciting matches at different rifle meetings." His words on musketry training and artillery practice will always have an interest. When distributing prizes at the Southern Indian Rifle Association meeting, held at the large and important military station of Bangalore, the Commander-in-Chief of the Madras Army told the sepoys and soldiers who had gathered to compete that it is not given to everyone to possess all the qualities which combine to form the *beau idéal* of a soldier. Some are more intelligent than their neighbours; others are of finer physique; others, again, have greater endurance; while some are blessed with a constitution which is proof against all the vicissitudes of climate. "But every one," said Sir Frederick, "with scarcely an exception, can become a good shot, and the more intelligent a man is the easier it is for him to learn to shoot." The Boer War demonstrated the truth of the proposition laid down by him, that "the smaller an army is, the greater necessity exists for its being able to shoot well"; "I have no hesitation in giving it as my opinion that, for ordinary fighting purposes, one good shot is nowadays equal to at least half a dozen bad ones. I may further add, and on this point I can speak with even more confidence, that, if ever I have the honour of being employed on field service, I shall endeavour to take with me those regiments which have gained the best reputation on the rifle-range."

While labouring hard to improve the efficiency of the Madras Native Army, Lord Roberts did not forget the British soldier. In war and peace a care for his men has been a chief feature of his character. His aim has been to reconcile the severity of military discipline with the dictates of humanity. As Commander-in-Chief he had been, as he tells us, unpleasantly struck by the frequent courts-martial on the younger

soldiers, and by the disproportionate number of these lads to be met with in military prisons.

"Even when the prisoners happened to be of some length of service, I usually found that they had undergone previous imprisonments, and had been severely punished within a short time of their enlistment. I urged that, in the first two or three years of a soldier's service, every allowance should be made for youth and inexperience, and that during that time faults should, whenever practicable, be dealt with summarily, and not visited with the heavier punishment which a court-martial sentence necessarily carries with it, and I pointed out that this procedure might receive a wider application, and become a guiding principle in the treatment of soldiers generally."

He also suggested that certain privileges should be granted to all men in possession of a good conduct badge.

"I have often remarked that those corps in which indulgences were most freely given contained the largest number of well-behaved men, and I had been assured that such indulgences were seldom abused, and that, while they were greatly appreciated by those who received them, they acted as an incentive to less well conducted men to try to redeem their characters."

Three years passed in the noble work of benefiting the soldier and the sepoy, and in making the army under his command a better fighting machine, by holding each winter a camp of exercise. In March, 1885, when the winter work was finished, Sir Frederick Roberts and his wife went to Calcutta to meet Lord Dufferin, who had in January taken over charge of his exalted office from Lord Ripon. Like Dalhousie and Canning and the majority of Indian Viceroys, Lord Dufferin indulged in the pleasant dream of a peaceful reign devoted to the passing of interior measures for the

comfort and benefit of the people. But he had no sooner come into power than he had to deal with a foreign question which threatened to disturb the peace of Europe, and touched the foundations of our Indian Empire. Russia, taking advantage of the entanglement of our troops in the Soudan, had rapidly advanced her power in Central Asia, until she had arrived in close proximity with the north-west frontier of Afghanistan.

In February, 1884, the Russians occupied Merv, contrary to the positive assurance of M. de Giers, the Russian Minister, given on the 9th of July, 1879, to Lord Dufferin, who was at the time English Ambassador in St. Petersburg, that there was no intention on the part of the Russian Government of going to Merv. "On the 30th of July, Lord Dufferin reported that M. de Giers had informed him that the Emperor had expressly approved the assurances he had given as to the non-advance of the Russian troops on Merv, and on the 12th of August the Emperor personally confirmed to Lord Dufferin the statement." * When Her Majesty's Government heard that "the Emperor had determined to accept the allegiance of the Merv Turcomans," they reminded the Russian Minister of the assurances given, and were informed that "the Imperial Government cannot allow that the assurances which they were enabled to give on different occasions to the British Cabinet can be held as formal engagements on their part never to take possession of Merv." † After considerable diplomatic fencing, the Russian Government agreed to a Joint Commission to demarcate the boundary between the Turcoman territory, recently annexed, and Afghanistan. On the 21st of November, 1884, General Sir Peter Lumsden,

* Earl Granville to Sir E. Thornton, Foreign Office, February 29th, 1884.

† Memorandum containing the views of the Imperial Ministry, St. Petersburg, March 17th (29th), 1884.

the British Commissioner, arrived on the frontier, but the Russian Government delayed to send their Commissioner until a definite line for the boundary had been settled, which the Commissioners should subsequently trace and lay down. "He (M. de Giers) gave me no precise idea as to where the proposed line would be," wrote the English Ambassador, "except by saying, as Herat seemed to be the point with regard to which the English people were most sensitive, he hoped that he should succeed in obtaining that the line should be at a sufficient distance from that place." * The Russian Government desired that the definite line which should form the sole basis of future discussion should include as Russian territory the fertile valley of Panjdeh, which had formed a part of Afghanistan ever since Afghanistan became a kingdom. Her Majesty's Government, however, thought "it right at once to say that they are unable to give their adhesion to any understanding by which Panjdeh or other districts claimed as Afghan shall, without inquiry on the spot, be excluded from Afghanistan." † During the time the Russian Government were hindering the meeting of the Boundary Commissioners, Russian troops had pushed close up to Panjdeh, and had come within striking distance of the Afghan outposts. At the close of February the Viceroy of India was informed by Earl Granville that instructions had been given to the Russian officers carefully to avoid conflicts with the Afghans, "and he has been instructed to inform the Amir accordingly in such manner as he may think advisable."

Soon after Lord Dufferin assumed the office of Governor-General, he invited the Amir to visit him in order to discuss the critical state of affairs on the north-western frontier of

* Memorandum in reply to the Memorandum enclosed in M. de Giers' dispatch of January 16th, 1885.

† *Ibid.*

his dominions.* The Amir readily accepted the invitation, and it was agreed that a meeting should take place at Rawal Pindi, one of the most important military stations in India, headquarters of the North-western Division of the Punjab, and the North-western Command. The Amir was to be received with considerable military pomp, and while at Calcutta Sir Frederick and Lady Roberts were bidden to be the guests of the Viceroy and Lady Dufferin.

In compliance with this request, Sir Frederick Roberts left Calcutta for the Punjab, halting at different places on the way. He paid a visit to Sir Alfred Lyall, his comrade in the dark days of the Mutiny, now Lieutenant-Governor of the North-west Provinces, a tract of country nearly the size of Great Britain, with a population of more than forty-seven millions. Lyall was encamped sixteen miles from Meerut, and one of his guests was Lord Randolph Churchill. Roberts had many discussions with Lord Randolph regarding the Indian Army and military administration. At Multan, Sir Frederick received the stirring tidings that it had been decided to mobilise two army corps, and that he was to have command of the first. The intimation took him by surprise. On reaching Rawal Pindi, he learnt the critical state of affairs on the north-western boundary of Afghanistan. The Government of India had, early in March, been instructed by the Home Government to assemble a *corps d'armée,* which should be prepared to march across Afghanistan for the relief of Herat in the event of an open rupture with Russia. On the 31st of March the Amir arrived at the Rawal Pindi railway station. As it was raining

* Abdurrahman in his Autobiography writes: "Hence Lord Dufferin (who was such a statesman that a wiser and more clever ruler than he has never ruled in India) perceived the necessity for such a visit as I proposed immediately after he had taken over the government of the Indian Empire into his hands. He selected the town of Rawal Pindi as the place of meeting, and accordingly invited me to visit him there. I could desire nothing better than this, and hurried off to India without losing any time."

hard, he preferred a closed carriage to the State elephant, and the procession which was to accompany him on the route to the house prepared for his residence had to be dismissed. "Ten thousand of the troops," the Viceroy records, "however, turned out, and presented a very businesslike appearance." The ceremonies were opened by a complimentary visit of the Amir to the Viceroy that afternoon. "I had the Duke of Connaught in my tent," says Lord Dufferin, "and the Amir was greatly gratified at finding the Queen's son waiting to greet him. The next day the Duke and I returned his visit, and the day after I had my first serious conversation with him. He is a broad-shouldered burly man, big rather than tall, with small eyes, a broad and rather pleasant face, with no trace whatever of the hook-nosed, keen-eyed Jewish Afghan type. He walks lame, and has suffered for years from neuralgia in the leg." * Sir Frederick, who called upon the Amir with Sir Alfred Lyall, described him as "about forty-five years of age, and although he required a stick to walk with, being a martyr to rheumatism, and very stout, his appearance was decidedly dignified and imposing. He had a manly, clever, and rather handsome face, marred only by the cruel expression of the mouth, and his manner was sufficiently courteous though somewhat abrupt."

The next day H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught and the Viceroy returned the Amir's visit, and on the 2nd of April the Amir had an interview with the Viceroy, in his carefully guarded tent, which lasted some hours. Many and momentous were the subjects discussed. The Viceroy had the experience, sagacity, and tact of a trained diplomatist; the Amir was an Afghan, and needed no training. His burly frame and bluff manner concealed his intellectual qualities of Machiavellian

* "The Life of the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava," by Sir Alfred Lyall, P.C., vol. ii., p. 90.

dissimulation, profound hypocrisy, and cruelty which knew no touch of remorse. Born to command, he knew how to rule fierce and treacherous tribes; he understood thoroughly the interests of his kingdom in its relation to foreign powers, and he pursued them with considerable skill and boldness. Before he met the Governor-General he had determined on his course, and would not depart a hair's breadth from it. The Viceroy, the most courteous of negotiators, suggested sending British troops to defend his frontier. Abdurrahman most politely but most firmly declined. His ignorant subjects might think they had come to subjugate the country and remain. The Viceroy then suggested that engineer officers should be sent to strengthen the defences of Herat. The Amir "replied in a very explicit and determined manner that, though he himself was grateful for the offer, he could not answer for his people. They were ignorant, brutal, and suspicious; he had fought with them himself for four years, and we must not suppose that he could control them, or move them about like pieces on a chessboard." * Abdurrahman was determined that neither British troops nor British officers should enter his territory, and he had no desire that his country should be made a battleground between England and Russia. He wanted a definite promise made by the Viceroy "in plain and clear words" to defend and protect the integrity of Afghanistan, because he considered it might check Russian aggression, and he required money and arms in order to repel Russian invasion or British interference. On the 6th of April, at a great durbar, he took the opportunity of publicly committing the British Government to the promises made by the Viceroy. It was not done in a moment of enthusiasm, as Lord Dufferin supposed, but it was a well calculated political stroke at a critical time,

* "The Life of the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava," by Sir Alfred Lyall, P.C., vol. ii., p. 92.

"I did this," he records in his autobiography, published many years afterwards, "that every one present at the durbar, and the world, should know about the pledges which Great Britain had given to me, that they would take upon themselves the responsibility of expelling any foreign power making aggressive attacks upon my country; and I added that in return for this I also would be true to my promise, and faithful in my friendship to Great Britain." That evening news reached the Governor-General of the collision between the Afghan and Russian troops at Panjdeh. "The Afghans fought gallantly, their losses were heavy, and Panjdeh was occupied by the Russians." * "The news was sent to me by Lord Dufferin himself," says the Amir, "but I was not the man to get excited, and therefore took the matter calmly as a lesson for the future." Sir Alfred Lyall writes: "There was something very characteristic, and certainly unexpected, in the equanimity, almost amounting to indifference, with which Abdurrahman first heard of an incident that startled all the courts and cabinets of Europe, and very nearly kindled a great war." The Amir had no desire to bring about war between England and Russia for a strip of land in the remote regions north of Afghanistan. He had attained the main objects of his visit—a guarantee, made public, that England would defend the integrity of Afghanistan, and that the Indian Government would supply him with breechloaders and heavy guns for Herat and ten lakhs of rupees—and he departed with fulsome professions of friendship.

On his return to Madras, Sir Frederick Roberts proceeded to Ootacamund, the summer headquarters of the Madras Army. He was working at the organisation of the military department under his command, when he received a telegram from Lord Dufferin on the 8th of July, stating that he was to succeed

* "The Life of William Ewart Gladstone," by John Morley, vol. iii., p. 183.

Sir Donald Stewart as Commander-in-Chief in India. On the defeat of the Gladstone Government in June, Lord Salisbury formed his first Ministry, and Lord Randolph Churchill entered the Cabinet as Secretary of State for India. Almost the first important step which he took on coming into power was to offer a seat in the Council of the Secretary of State for India to Sir Donald Stewart, and on it being accepted, the latter pressed the claims of Sir Frederick Roberts to be his successor. His biographer writes: "Very powerful influences supported the high claims of Lord Wolseley, and, as the appointment of the Indian Commander-in-Chief rested according to practice with the Secretary of State for War, the matter hung for some days in suspense. But Lord Randolph was insistent. His long and friendly talks with Sir Frederick Roberts during his visit to India had made a great impression upon him. All his life he continued to assert that Roberts was the first soldier of his age. The Russian crisis and Sir Frederick's unequalled service and experience in the theatre of possible war constituted in his eyes overwhelming qualifications. He won the agreement of Lord Salisbury; he persuaded the Queen. In less than five weeks after the Government had taken office, the appointment was announced, and was received with general assent and satisfaction."

As Sir Donald Stewart was not giving up his command before November, Sir Frederick obtained leave to England in order that he might have a short holiday before he assumed for five years the heavy burden of the most responsible military office under the Crown. He loitered with his family in Italy and Switzerland on his way home, and after staying six weeks in England he returned to India. At the end of November he assumed command of the Indian army, and Sir Donald Stewart went home to assist with his long experience,

thorough knowledge, and sound judgment the counsels of the Indian administration in England.

During the winter of 1885, Sir Frederick Roberts was engaged in conducting military manœuvres at Delhi, which he had arranged on a much larger scale than had hitherto been planned. Twelve officers, representing the armies of Europe and America, had been very wisely invited by Lord Randolph Churchill to attend the camp. Lord Dufferin, who took a keen interest in all military matters, hired a small house near the camp, and went up from Calcutta to be present at the closing days of the manœuvres. The afternoon after his arrival he spent watching the military sports open to officers and men, and there were competitors of various races. "Sir Frederick Roberts opened them by a successful tent-pegging feat, and that was very effective, as everybody said no other Commander-in-Chief in the world could have attempted such a thing." * On the 18th of January 35,000 troops of all arms began to take up their positions for the march past, and the brown rugged stretch of ground beneath the lofty battlements of the Imperial city became a kaleidoscope of vivid hues and metallic flashes. Thirty-one guns banged for the Viceroy's salute as Lord Dufferin took up his position on the field. Then were heard volleying thunders, and the rain came down in tropical torrents. The plain swiftly became a sea of mud. For four hours the troops marched steadily through the storm before the representative of their Sovereign. Lord Dufferin, in a letter, recorded his impression of the scene:

"Though the glitter of the spectacle was dimmed, the sight was splendid. One forgot the storm and everything else in one's interest in looking at the men. Indeed, from a business point of view I am not sure but what it was better as it was,

* "Our Viceregal Life in India," by the Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava, vol. i., p. 284.

as it enabled our soldiers to show what pluck and discipline could effect, in spite of adverse circumstances. Though they were almost up to their knees in mud, each battalion marched past like a straight and solid wall. The ground was especially trying to our poor little short-legged Gurkhas, but they ground their teeth and set their faces, and passed the saluting flag in as level a line as any other regiment. . . . Roberts was delighted, and it did my heart good to see forty thousand men advance in line with him at their head. He considers that the lessons we have learned are well worth the money which has been spent, and I really believe it is the case. Indeed, I imagine it would be well if the same sort of thing, though on a lesser scale, could be gone through every year. Both men and officers must learn a great deal, and it shows up at once our capable and incapable commanders.

"The foreign officers were somewhat surprised at the fine physique and efficiency of our native soldiers, but they all remarked on the paucity of British officers with the Indian regiments, which I could not but acknowledge was, as it still is, a weak point in our military organisation."

Twenty-eight years have passed, and the paucity of British officers is still a weak point, fraught with considerable danger, in our military organisation. The foreign officers were not only surprised at the fine physique and efficiency of our native soldiers, but they also realised the innumerable sources of recruits in the vast continent.

From Delhi Sir Frederick Roberts proceeded to Calcutta, and accompanied the Viceroy to Burma. At the time when the projected shadow of Russia fell upon the north of Afghanistan, the shadow of another European Power was cast on the independent kingdom of Upper Burma, situated on the south-east border of the Indian Empire. It was, like Afghanistan, one of those states flanking our dominions which the British

Government must maintain against the encroachment of any foreign Power. Like the Amir Shere Ali, Theebaw, King of Burma, played the hazardous game of an active alliance with a neighbouring European Power, who had by vast acquisitions on the eastern side of the Further Indian Peninsula come gradually almost into contact with the Burmese border.

In May, 1883, the Court of Ava had dispatched envoys to Europe on a pretended mission for obtaining information relating to industrial arts and science, but in reality to make political and commercial treaties with foreign Powers which they might play against the British. In January, 1885, a treaty was signed between the French Government and King Theebaw. According to that treaty a French engineer was appointed the Consul of France at Mandalay, and was succeeded by M. Haas (in May, 1885), who was a most able and energetic man, and obtained concessions for working the rubber and timber forests, a French bank was to be established at Mandalay, a French flotilla was to navigate the Irrawaddy, and a trade route was to be opened out through the Shan States to Upper Tonquin. But it was discovered in July that the route was not intended merely for trade purposes. In January the French Prime Minister had written to the Burmese Minister for Foreign Affairs that "when peace and order prevail in Tonquin, amicable arrangements will be come to with the Burmese Government for the passage through the province of arms of various kinds, ammunition, and military stores generally."* In July Lord Randolph Churchill drew the attention of Lord Salisbury to the rumours of a new Franco-Burmese convention. Lord Salisbury replied: "The

* "Burma Under British Rule—and Before," by John Nisbet, vol. i., p. 63. Parliamentary Blue-Book Correspondence relating to Burma (Cd. 4611), 1886.

telegram, if not a *canard,* is painfully important. The King of Burma must not be allowed to conclude any such convention." * A month later the High Court of Ava fined the Bombay-Burma Trading Corporation the sum of 23 lakhs (£153,333) on a pretext that certain custom duties had not been paid. The intention was to ruin the company and transfer the concession to a French firm. The Government of India proposed that the case should be referred to arbitration, but the Burmese Government declined to agree to the proposal. On October 16th Lord Dufferin transmitted to the India Office the draft of an ultimatum to be sent to King Theebaw. Lord Randolph Churchill, with characteristic promptitude, telegraphed: "The terms of your ultimatum approved." On October the 22nd the ultimatum was dispatched to the Burmese king, and at the suggestion of Lord Randolph Churchill an answer was demanded within a specified time. His Majesty was required to suspend action in the execution of the decree against the Trading Corporation, to receive at Mandalay a British Envoy with whom the outstanding disputes should be settled, and to admit a permanent Resident at his Court, who should be received and treated with the respect due to the Government which he represented. The king was also informed that he would in future be required to defer to the advice of the British Government in regard to his foreign relations, and that an answer must be received not later than the 10th November. Lord Randolph Churchill had suggested that the dispatch of the ultimatum "should be concurrent with movement of troops and ships to Rangoon," and a powerful expeditionary force was sent from India to Burma. It was under the command of General Prendergast,† and it was concentrated at Thyetmyo, the frontier military station on the Irra-

* "Lord Randolph Churchill," by Winston Spencer Churchill, M.P., vol. i., p. 522.

† The late General Sir Harry Prendergast, V.C., K.C.B.

waddy. On the 9th of November a reply to the ultimatum was received. The Burmese Government refused to discuss the case against the Corporation; as for a British Resident he would "be permitted to come and go as in former times," and they intended to manage their own foreign relations. On the 7th of November, King Theebaw issued a proclamation calling upon all his subjects to expel the English. Three days later the Viceroy telegraphed to the Secretary of State for the approval of the Cabinet to begin war. On the 11th November Lord Randolph Churchill telegraphed: "Please instruct General Prendergast to advance on Mandalay at once." On the 13th the orders were issued, and the advance up the river began. The plan of operations had been prescribed by Sir Frederick Roberts, and they proved eminently successful. On November 17th the fort of Minhla, with its two outer lines of defence, was stormed after some stubborn fighting. On the 27th of November the royal city of Mandalay, situated about three or four miles from the Irrawaddy, was occupied, and King Theebaw was a prisoner. On the afternoon of the 29th of November a pomp proceeded slowly down to the river. First there came a regiment of Madras Infantry followed by a battery of Royal Artillery, then two Burmese carts, drawn by bullocks, containing the King and Queen, with white or royal umbrellas held over them, and behind them marched the Royal Welsh Fusiliers. Large crowds lined the roads, and here and there the wailings of women were heard. Darkness had begun to fall when the river bank was reached. Queen Supaya-lat cried bitterly when she walked on to the steamer that was to bear her and the king into exile.

On the 1st of January the following proclamation was issued by the Viceroy: "By command of the Queen-Empress, it is hereby notified that the territories formerly governed by King Theebaw will no longer be under his rule, but have

become part of Her Majesty's dominions, and will, during Her Majesty's pleasure, be administered by such officers as the Viceroy and Governor-General of India may, from time to time, appoint." The new territory incorporated into the British dominions had an area larger than that of France, and contained a population computed at three and a half millions. The future government of this vast territory was a difficult and grave problem, and Lord Dufferin decided that, in order to arrive at any satisfactory solution, he must visit Upper Burma and make a personal inquiry into the condition of the country. The Viceroy was accompanied by the Commander-in-Chief, in order that Sir Frederick should draw up a plan of operations for the pacification of the new territory, the larger portion of which was impenetrable jungle of tree-forest or scrub. On the 12th of February, Lord Dufferin arrived at Mandalay, which a little reminded him of Moscow. "Theebaw's palace was also very interesting, with its golden pillars and dusky courts, and fretted golden roofs and cornices. The interior chambers are much like what the palaces of the old Argive kings, or of Ulysses, must have been, the roofs supported by a multiplicity of columns, and everything glistening with gold. Unlike those of the Greeks, however, Theebaw's walls are of golden lattice-work, so that you can see through into the courts beyond." A busy week was spent by the Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief in discussing and settling the numerous intricate questions which demanded attention. According to the advice of the Commander-in-Chief, the Upper and Lower Burma commands were united under General Prendergast, with headquarters at Rangoon, and Mandalay became the headquarters of a brigade under General White, and Bhamo of another brigade under General Norman. Military posts were established and small movable columns were organised. "When in Mandalay, Sir Frederick Roberts laid down a minimum strength for each post

and column, and the judiciousness of these arrangements was proved by the fact of no post being forced." *

Sir Frederick Roberts returned with the Viceregal party to Rangoon, and crossed the Bay of Bengal with them to Madras. Thence he proceeded to Bombay to meet Lady Roberts, who was returning from England, and having escorted her to Simla, he proceeded to the North-West Frontier, "for the question of its defence was one which interested me very deeply, and I hoped that, from the position I now held as a member of the Government of India, I should be able to get my ideas on this, to India, all-important subject listened to, if not altogether carried out."

Sir Frederick Roberts first went to Baluchistan in order to study the special problem of the border in front of Quetta. On the 17th of March he was present when the great railway bridge over the Chappar Rift, a chasm in the limestone range through which the Hurnai Railway runs, was opened by H.R.H. the Duchess of Connaught, and was named Louise Margaret in her honour. An engine ran over the whole line from Sibi to Quetta, and a stupendous feat of engineering was completed—the construction of a railway from the plains of Baluchistan to the Pisheen Plateau on the borders of Afghanistan. At Quetta, the great arsenal which guards this frontier and the main roads leading from South Afghanistan to India, Sir Frederick met the Agent to the Governor-General for Baluchistan, Robert Sandeman, a true successor of Edwardes and Nicholson, who, by his indomitable courage and perseverance, acquired a large frontier province for the Empire without the shedding of blood, and by his strong and sympathetic administration won the confidence and affection of the barbaric tribes. Lord Roberts writes: "In 1886 we marched

* "Burma under British Rule—and Before," by John Nisbet, vol. i., p. 110.

from Dera Ghazi Khan to Quetta through the Marri-Bugti country with only a small cavalry escort. The people of the country looked after us, not a shot was fired, and we experienced the greatest civility and kindness. Such a thing would have been impossible a year or two before, and it would have been impossible then but for the extraordinary influence Sandeman had obtained over the tribes. He knew everyone, and everyone knew and was glad to meet the Commissioner Sahib. His position amongst the wild, lawless Baluchis was quite unique." * At Quetta, Sir Frederick also met Major-General Sir James Browne, R.E.—a forward soldier in war, whose ability as an engineer and dogged resolution in surmounting all obstacles were so conspicuously shown in the construction of the Hurnai Railway—and thence, accompanied by Sandeman and Browne, visited the Kwaja-Amran Range, which separates Southern Afghanistan from British territory, and the Commander-in-Chief selected the best position for an entrenched camp to the rear of those mountains.

After having decided as to the measures to be taken to meet the defensive and offensive requirements of Quetta and the Bolan Pass, Sir Frederick Roberts made his way to Peshawar and the Khyber Pass. A Defence Committee, which had been appointed when Donald Stewart was Commander-in-Chief to consider the defence of the frontier, had proposed the construction of a large magazine at Peshawar and extensive entrenched works at the mouth of the Khyber. Sir Frederick objected to both proposals on strategic grounds. He considered the improvement of our communications of far greater importance than the immediate construction of first-aid entrenchments. On his return to Simla he drew up a memorandum in which he stated:

"Meanwhile I would push on our communications with all

* "Colonel Sir Robert Sandeman," by Thomas Henry Thornton, p. 278.

possible speed; we must have roads, and we must have railways; they cannot be made on short notice, and every rupee spent upon them now will repay us tenfold hereafter. Nothing will tend to secure the safety of the frontier so much as the power of rapidly concentrating troops on any threatened point, and nothing will strengthen our military position more than to open out the country and improve our relations with the frontier tribes. There are no better civilisers than roads and railways; and although some of those recommended to be made may never be required for military purposes, they will be of the greatest assistance to the civil power in the administration of the country."

At the close of the Simla season Sir Frederick Roberts was marching across the mountains to inspect the military hill stations of Dhurmsala and Dalhousie when he received a telegram informing him that General Sir Herbert Macpherson, who was in supreme command of the forces in Burma, had died of malarious fever on the 2nd of October, 1886, and at the same time a message from the Viceroy asking him to transfer his headquarters to Burma "until a decisive impression has been made upon the existing elements of rebellion." Lord Dufferin wrote to the Secretary of State:

"It is a matter of great importance that there should be no delay in setting in motion the arrangements for the winter operations which for some time past have been under such careful preparation, and Roberts has them all at his fingers' ends. Moreover, it is an advantage that at this particular juncture there should be at the head of our military affairs in Burma a man who is personally on good terms with the head of the civil administration and the Brigadiers. A new-comer might act like a bull in a china-shop, whereas Roberts will at once put all the wheels in motion without friction, and in the most intelligent and effective manner. Probably in two months he

might be withdrawn; and in the meantime we should be able, with due deliberation, to prepare for the relegation of his command to a fitting successor." *

Sir Frederick immediately set off for Calcutta, embarked in the first mail steamer, arrived at Rangoon on the 9th November and at Mandalay on the 17th November. His new field of action was extensive and his duties onerous. The normal condition of the country from Bhamo to Minhla, from the Shan Plateau to the Chin Mountains, was one of anarchy and war. The former troops of the king, who had taken to the jungle, waged a guerilla campaign against the invaders. The people, who had no desire to be governed by foreign usurpers, either joined them or rendered them every assistance. They forgot the evils which they had endured at the hands of hereditary bandits and gang robbers. They did not welcome as Lord Dufferin had been led to suppose, "the prospect of the substitution of a strong and orderly government for the incompetent and cruel tyranny of their former ruler." Foreign rulers are apt not to appreciate the shrewd remark of an Indian statesman: "A man loves his own father, however great a rip he may be, better than his step-father who is the pink of virtue." Eight months had passed since the annexation of Upper Burma, and little had been accomplished towards repressing violence and establishing tranquillity. Sir Frederick Roberts at once made arrangements for a series of combined movements being carried on for the suppression of the large bands under various leaders who infested the country. But it was no easy task to destroy or capture bodies of mounted men who knew every stream or ravine and had every peasant for a spy. Considerable reinforcements had been sent during the year to Burma, but Sir Frederick saw that they were not sufficient for

* "The Life of the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava," by Sir Alfred Lyall, P.C., vol. ii., pp. 129-30.

the work, considering the vast area of the country, and he obtained five more regiments from India. He also recommended the rapid organisation of a military police in India for service in Burma. He issued some general instructions for the guidance of the officers in command of the different columns; as he kept a close watch over all their movements, he stimulated their energy, and during the cold season control began to be obtained over the country. "When Sir Frederick (Roberts) returned to India in February, 1887," says Sir Charles Crosthwaite—whose pacification of Upper Burma has a high title to rank with Mountstuart Elphinstone's pacification of the Deccan and John Lawrence's administration of the Punjab—"the subjugation of Upper Burma had been accomplished and the way was cleared for the civil administration."

The special services which Sir Frederick rendered in Burma were recognised by his being given the degree of the Grand Cross of the Most Eminent Order of the Indian Empire. He writes:

"My name appeared in the Jubilee *Gazette* as having been given the Grand Cross of the Indian Empire, but what I valued still more was the acceptance by the Government of India of my strong recommendations for the establishment of a club or institute in every British regiment and battery in India."

The aim and object of these institutes was to advance the social condition of the soldier and to reduce intemperance by the provision of such reasonable comfort, and physical as well as mental recreation, as to make them a centre of attraction, and so lessen the habit of seeking entertainment elsewhere. The plan has been carried out in nearly every regiment stationed in India, and has proved most successful.

At the close of the Simla season the Commander-in-Chief made another tour among the northern and western frontiers of the Empire. In November he went from Quetta to Karachi,

the important seaport near the mouth of the Indus, to meet the Viceroy, who was bound for Baluchistan. They went over the harbour together and examined the forts that were building for its protection. As Commander-in-Chief Sir Frederick was also head of the Defence Committee, and a great deal was done during his tenure of office to render the harbours of India safe and secure. The Viceroy, on leaving Karachi, was carried by the railway through "a most weird and extraordinary country—high mountains, glens and gorges without a blade of grass," through tunnels, over skeleton bridges across the Chappar Rift, to the foot of the Kwaja-Amran Range. The next morning Lord Dufferin and Sir Frederick cantered up to the top of the ridge. "The sight looking towards Kandahar was glorious. At our feet there stretched a great scarlet sea of sand, with black islands of basalt rising up here and there in the midst of it. Beyond were the blue hills that encircle Kandahar. It made me feel a little like Moses on Pisgah, though I do not know that Sir Frederick Roberts, who was with me, will be the Joshua to descend into the promised land." *

The viceregal party proceeded from Quetta to Dehra Ghazi Khan. "Here a number of Beloochi chiefs met the Viceroy, and for more than a mile the road was close lined with their followers on horseback. They are a wild-looking set of men, with long hair in curls and long beards, white loose garments and turbans." †

From the northern frontier Sir Frederick Roberts went to Delhi, to attend a cavalry camp of exercise and an artillery practice camp in the Delhi Division; and thence he proceeded to Meerut to be present at the first meeting of the Bengal Presidency Rifle Association. The Commander-in-Chief,

* "The Life of the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava," by Sir Alfred Lyall, P.C., vol. ii., p. 172.

† "Our Viceregal Life in India," by the Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava, vol. ii., p. 212.

without subscribing entirely to Napoleon's observation that "fire is everything, the rest is of no account," held a decided opinion that "in future wars superiority of fire will tell even more than it has in the past." In his speech at the first meeting of the Bengal Rifle Association, he said: "The more I study the question of modern fire tactics and the latest inventions in weapons of war, the more I become convinced that those troops who combine superior individual marksmanship with a sound and thoroughly well-mastered system of fire-control and discipline will in future be the victors whenever armies meet."

The Commander-in-Chief proceeded to inform his audience how this ideal was to be attained. Every officer must believe in musketry, and take a deep interest in it; every soldier must endeavour to have such a mastery over his rifle as to make him feel that he has, in the cool and steady use of it, the best form of defence against infantry. Throughout his tenure of office in India, Lord Roberts never ceased to impress upon his officers that they should do all in their power to excel in musketry, and to train the soldier to combine straight shooting with the highest form of discipline which is demanded of those who in action aspire to fire steadily and by word of command.

"Attempts have been made to separate these two qualifications of a good soldier, and exalt one at the expense of the other; but they are not separated. They are mutually dependent on each other, and neither by itself is of much value. The finest fire discipline is of little use if a large proportion of the bullets are delivered wide of the position at which the shooters are directed to aim, and the straightest individual shooting cannot, under most conditions, be very effective unless it is capable of combined action, and be concentrated at will upon any object. I understand that this was exemplified in a remarkable manner during the recent Black Mountain expedition, as it certainly was in Afghanistan. The best marksmen

when firing singly were seldom able to dislodge the enemy's sharpshooters, while well-aimed volleys never failed to do so."

Sir Frederick, before he resigned his Indian command, had the satisfaction of seeing the rifle meetings held in different districts of his charge increase in popularity year by year, and a marked improvement in the general standard of musketry. After ten years' strenuous preaching and labour, he was able to say: "The bulk of our infantry in India are now infinitely more efficient in a musketry sense than were the select marksmen of regiments at the time of the Afghan war."

At the artillery camps also he never wearied of impressing on officers and men the utmost necessity of the highest form of discipline, which trains a man to know when to obey mechanically, and when to exercise his intelligence. He told the gunner what he told the infantry soldier: "Your weapon has been improved, and unless you thoroughly know how to use it you are useless." But, as with the infantry soldier, good shooting is not all that is required: "Modern teaching and experience show us that if we are to excel, or even equal, the best artilleries of Europe, we must do much more than lay each gun accurately. Good as individual excellence is, combined excellence is better, and in war concerted action of artillery is as absolutely essential to success as it is in the case of infantry or cavalry."

The following, taken from his speech at the artillery camp near Delhi so far back as 1889, is interesting and instructive when read by the light of after events:

"Hitherto, as you doubtless know, it has been the custom when on service in this country for officers in command to rush their batteries well to the front, and then to let the subalterns and non-commissioned officers choose their own objects to fire at, and hit the enemy in their own way. This plan answered well enough with the foes we have been accus-

tomed to fight in India, for the right way undoubtedly in dealing with Asiatics is to get to close quarters as soon as possible; moreover, we have always felt tolerably sure that our guns were better horsed and better served than those pitted against us. In the future this may not be the case; our next enemy may possibly be a European one, with an artillery as well armed and as well served as our own. It behoves us, therefore, to aim at a far higher standard than has up till now been considered necessary; for with foes equally well armed, that artillery will win which can soonest find the range of its enemy, and, when found, fire with the greatest accuracy, steadiness, and rapidity."

Sir Frederick Roberts again dwelt on this point in his speech delivered at the Royal Artillery practice camp near Secunderabad on the 11th of February, 1891. He said:

"The rough, hasty laying of guns, formerly recognised as a normal procedure, and even now, I am afraid, not altogether grown obsolete, will no longer suffice to silence the hostile fire of a well-trained artillery, nor by it will you be able to bring that heavy shower of shrapnel bullets on the enemy's infantry which is indispensable if you want to shake his nerves and prevent him doing such serious damage to your men and horses as may quite possibly stop your batteries from taking up a second position and continuing the fight. There must be considerably more quickness in preparing and serving the ammunition, still more accuracy in laying the guns, and, above all, better observation of fire on the part of battery commanders, without which the other points are of little avail. Intelligence must be brought to bear upon the supervision of fire, and its conduct must be regulated by method, otherwise, believe me, your individual skill and gallantry, although these may be as conspicuous as in the past, will nevertheless fail to serve you effectually."

Sir Frederick Roberts's speeches not only display the vigour and grasp of their author's mind, but they also show that amidst the incessant press of business which the office of Commander-in-Chief in India involves, he found leisure to think out the problems which might confront a general in the future. The following extract is a proof of this: "I trust that in the British Army, at any rate, we shall hear no more of the 'moral effect' produced by guns, but of their destructive power; and that generals in command will readily put up with the inconvenience which long lines of guns and wagons on the march undoubtedly cause for the sake of having a superior force of well-served artillery, the possession of which would in all probability lead to victory."

Sir Frederick Roberts laboured hard to bring the army under his command into a state to take the field quickly in case of war, thoroughly prepared for a campaign. As Commander-in-Chief he was head of the Mobilisation Committee. The main object of the scheme of mobilisation was to lay down certain standards of organisation for service within or beyond the frontiers of India or beyond sea; to prepare plans of movement in various directions for a certain portion of the army which could be withdrawn for field service, and to elaborate the innumerable details which are necessary to complete a plan of this kind. Notwithstanding numerous difficulties—military and political—steady progress was made, so that one-fourth, or say 70,000 men, of the army in India or beyond could be put in motion for field service in India or beyond it, without confusion and with reasonable regularity and dispatch. Twelve days after the orders were issued, the mobilisation of the troops for the Chitral campaign was completed. As the head of the Defence Committee, a great deal was done by Sir Frederick Roberts to render the harbours of India safe and secure. The position of the native soldiers was, during his tenure of office,

in many ways improved. The system of granting lands to native officers was placed on a satisfactory footing, and a scheme for the employment of pensioned native soldiers was greatly developed.

On the 9th of December Lord Dufferin made over the charge of the Indian Empire to the Marquis of Lansdowne, and the military reforms, whose foundations were laid during his administration, were completed by his successor. Lord Dufferin and Lord Lansdowne entered upon military questions, of great magnitude and importance, as statesmen : they acquired a large experience of the working of the military administration, but they did not delude themselves into the idea that they were military experts. The military Member of Council and the Commander-in-Chief, Sir George Chesney, a brave soldier, a strong administrator, and a man of letters, was Sir Frederick Roberts's military colleague for about three years, and the two soldiers worked together in thorough accord for a common object—the improvement of the Indian Army. At the close of 1889 Sir Frederick Roberts accompanied Lord Lansdowne on the tour he made along the northern and western frontiers. They rode through the Khyber and Gomal Passes, visited Peshawar, Kohat, the fair and fertile valley of Bannu (which Herbert Edwardes had been sent to subdue, to raise, and to civilise), Dera Ismail Khan (the camp of Ishmael) and Quetta, where Lord Lansdowne received, at a public durbar, the Khan of Khelat, the Jam of Las Bela, and a number of the chiefs and sirdars of Baluchistan.

While on his journey from the north to Calcutta Sir Frederick received a letter from Mr. Stanhope, Secretary of State for War, offering him the post of Adjutant-General in succession to Lord Wolseley, and he accepted it, but a few months later he received a telegram from the Secretary of State informing him that, "as it was then found to be impossible to

choose my successor, and as the exigencies of the public service urgently required my presence in India, the Cabinet, with the approval of Her Majesty and the concurrence of the Duke of Cambridge, had decided to ask me to retain my command for two more years." The Duke of Connaught was eminently fitted to be his successor, but the political responsibilities of the Commander-in-Chief as a member of the Executive Council of the Viceroy were a strong objection to the office being filled by a son of the Queen. Sir Frederick felt it his duty to obey the wishes of the Queen, Her Majesty's Government, and the Duke of Cambridge, Commander-in-Chief.

Two years rolled on, and the period of Sir Frederick's sojourn in India was now approaching its term. On the 1st of January, 1892, he was informed that the Queen had been pleased to confer on him a peerage. He had not sought the honour, and a telegram from the Viceroy congratulating him was the first intimation and a complete surprise. At the same time the Secretary of State offered him a further extension of his command. But after seven years' strenuous work, rest and change of climate were needed, and Lord Roberts expressed, with a pang of regret, his wish to lay down his great office in the spring of 1893. Many military questions engaged his attention during his last season at Simla: he pressed forward the scheme which he had so long advocated—the abolition of the Presidency Army system, which entailed the division of the Indian Army into four army corps directly under his successor. Two years after he left India the scheme, after much deliberation and discussion, was finally approved and adopted under the Commander-in-Chief. Before leaving their Himalayan home for the last time, a farewell gift was presented to Lady Roberts for the good work she had done in promoting the comfort and welfare of the wives and children of the British soldier, and in establishing under her auspices homes and

hospitals in the mountains for the officers. From Simla they went to Peshawar, where they stayed a few days. Forty years had passed since we first set forth on our journey with the subaltern of Bengal Artillery to that frontier station. Most of his companions had stolen silently away to join their comrades —John Lawrence, Herbert Edwardes, Nicholson, Outram, Napier, and many another brave and constant heart who had built and saved England's Empire.

The next stage was to Rawal Pindi, to be present at a camp of exercise and to see the progress of the works which Lord Roberts had recommended should be constructed for the protection of that most important arsenal. From thence the party journeyed to Lahore, where a series of entertainments had been organised to bid Lord Roberts farewell. The addresses presented to him from the different communities which constitute the population of the Punjab breathed a tone of sincere regret. From Lahore the party travelled southward, halting here and there to bid farewell to old friends, until Calcutta was reached. In February he made an official tour to Lucknow, and visited spots which must have awakened in his memory many strong scenes of mortal conflict. The Talukdars, or Barons, of Oudh, the majority of whom had been against us in the Mutiny, held a splendid public gathering in the Wingfield Park, and presented him with an address and a sword of honour. On his return to Calcutta he was the guest of the European community at a public banquet given in the Town Hall, and the old walls echoed the loud cheers of the planters who had come from Behar and Assam to do him honour. A few days before his departure the Annual Military Sports were held, and in the tent-pegging competition the Commander-in-Chief, at full gallop, took, with his spear, peg after peg, and never was a man more cheered by the British soldier, and loud was the "Wah! Wah!" of the sepoy. As he sat on his horse before us, with his erect bearing

Photograph by Emery Walker, Ltd.

LORD ROBERTS AND HIS CHARGER VONOLEL

From the Painting by C. W. Furse, A.R.A.

By permission of Messrs. Copperfield, Ltd.

and kindly manner, talking to a group of native officers in their vulgar tongue, we discovered why it was that he secured the affection, not less than he commanded the respect, of all who approached him.

On the 4th of March, 1893, Lord Roberts wrote to me: "I have arranged to reach Delhi in the morning of Monday, the 27th March, and remain there until the evening of Wednesday, the 29th idem. If you can meet me there, we might go over the position together." As I was then engaged on the Delhi volume of my "History of the Indian Mutiny," I gladly availed myself of the opportunity of having described to me, on the theatre of their enactment, the principal operations of the great siege by one who had taken part in it. I arrived at Delhi on the morning of the 27th, and that afternoon we made our expedition. Lord Roberts drove me first to the ramp which leads to the Kabul Gate, and here, alighting from the carriage, we walked up a narrow lane, bounded on the right by the walls of the city, and on the left by houses with flat roofs, affording convenient shelter for sharpshooters. Sixty yards from the ramp the wall and lane suddenly bend, and on the city side there is a strong, lofty house, with a blank wall broken by only two windows. From one of these windows, in all probability, was fired the shot which proved fatal to John Nicholson. A tablet marks the spot where he fell. Near the spot grows a tall and graceful tree, and Nicholson ordered himself to be laid beneath its shade, and said: "I will remain here till Delhi is taken." But for once he was disobeyed. Lord Roberts told us how, at the Kashmere Gate, he found a dooly deserted by its bearers. On opening the curtains he discovered Nicholson, who said that he was in great agony, and asked him to have him removed to hospital.

As we drove through the Kashmere Gate we stopped to read the inscription on the simple tablet which that fine soldier,

Lord Napier of Magdala, had erected to the gallant men who had sacrificed their lives in blowing up the gate the day the guilty city was stormed. On the slab are inscribed the names of the four sepoys who also took part in that brave deed. Two were wounded and one was killed. It is meet and right to honour the memory of those who, in spite of terrible temptation, remained faithful to their colours. The history of the Mutiny abounds with examples of heroic deeds wrought by Englishmen; it also provides numberless instances of extraordinary valour, and of noble self-sacrifice displayed by sepoys for their officers.

Leaving the Kashmere Gate, we drove through a road lined with fine trees, till we came to a low wall which separates Ludlow Castle from the road. It was here, on the morning of the assault, that Lord Roberts saw Nicholson at the head of his column. Leaving the carriage, we walked through the grounds till we came to two miniature embrasures, marking the site of the famous No. 2 Battery which made the breach for us to enter. Lord Roberts, who had charge of two right guns of the left section, explained in a few precise words the structure of the Great Breaching Battery. It was extraordinary how, during that afternoon, he was ready in an instant with every detail and every circumstance of the siege. As we walked back to the carriage, he spoke of the courage, skill, and great resource which Alex Taylor displayed in designing the batteries and fixing their sites.

After leaving Ludlow Castle we proceeded along the road till we reached the top of the Ridge where was enacted one of the great events of our nation's history. Deserting the carriage, we walked to the Military Cemetery, consecreated to immortality. No single hero sleeps here, but beneath the numerous mounds, covered with yellow grass, lies the dust of warriors who died for England, and bequeathed to her their

patient strength and fiery courage. Leaving the cemetery, we retraced our steps till we reached the Flagstaff Tower, where the besieging force, after their first victory, found a cartload of dead bodies, no doubt those of the officers murdered on the 11th of May. Farther on, to the south, is an old Pathan mosque, whose stout walls also afforded shelter to a picket. Not far from it was the Observatory, a strong old building, near which our heavy gun battery was placed. It was difficult to follow Lord Roberts, who, in spite of "forty-one years in India," went with quick step over the rough ground, tracing the remains of the battery and the breastworks on the edge of the slope of the Ridge. After a tramp of some hundred yards we came to Hindu Rao's house, and gazed on its battered walls. "How men could have held a building so battered and riddled with shot and shell, the very target of the enemy, is a marvel; yet, as the siege progressed, when it was proposed to remove even the sick and wounded in hospital, they violently protested against being carried away from their comrades even to a place of safety."* Thence we made our way to the extreme right of the Ridge, where the lofty Memorial of the great siege stands. Here the besiegers had a heavy gun battery, known as the Right Battery, which was twelve hundred yards from the city wall. A few hundred yards beyond the Memorial is the shrine which the soldiers who so stoutly defended the temple called the "Sammy House," and about it dwells the memory of many a hard-fought contest and many a signal deed of valour.

We returned to the Memorial, and as we rested on its steps we saw a sight of great beauty. Below us lay a stretch of broken ground dotted with green trees. Beyond it was a long line of purple walls, within which rose the fair city with its stately mosques and minarets. As we gazed, the white dome

* C. Raikes, "Notes on the Revolt in the North-West Provinces," p. 79.

of the Jumma Musjid caught a pale pink flush, and of a sudden the full glory of the setting sun fell upon the tall red minarets, and a golden glow swept over the blue waters of the Jumna. All was peaceful now. It was hard to picture the mortal strife for Empire which took place in that valley only a quarter of a century before.

Quitting with regret our point of vantage, we descended the Ridge and drove back towards the city. As we approached the Kashmere Gate, Lord Roberts expressed his intention of paying a last visit to the grave of John Nicholson, for his "forty-one years' service in India" had been completed, and he was on his way home. Thirty-six years before, the Commander-in-Chief, then a subaltern in the Bengal Artillery, had marched out of Delhi on the morning of Nicholson's funeral. "It was a matter of regret to me," he writes in his modest autobiography, "that I was unable to pay a last tribute of respect to my loved and honoured friend and commander by following his body to the grave, but I could not leave the column." The old cemetery stands by the road, and is surrounded by lofty trees. The inside is bright with budding flowers and roses. Near the entrance is the grave of John Nicholson. A few roses were placed on the tomb by his old comrade, and he stood for many minutes gazing at the resting-place of his loved and honoured friend. He then joined us at the gate, and as we drove away beyond the cemetery walls we had, through the trees, a glimpse of the breach through which Nicholson led his victorious soldiers. "I never saw anyone like him," was the only remark that broke the silence.*

From Delhi the homeward-bound party proceeded to Bombay, where the members of the Byculla Club gave Lord Roberts a farewell dinner. The last words of his speech, which he spoke with visible emotion, were:

* "Cities of India," by G. W. Forrest, C.I.E., p. 157.

"Ties which it is not easy to loosen bind me to India and to the gallant comrades with whom I have served so long. I leave India with the deepest regret. Almost all my most valued friendships have been made out here, not only amongst my own countrymen, but amongst the natives in various parts of India, to many of whom I am greatly attached. From everyone with whom I have been associated, whether European or native, whether civilian or soldier, I have received invariable and unfailing kindness, sympathy and support. My interest in the progress and welfare of this country will continue unabated, whatever the future may have in store for me. To the Army in India I bid farewell with feelings too deep for words. To its discipline, bravery, and devotion to duty both in peace and war I owe whatever success it has been my good fortune to achieve."

Next day Lord Roberts embarked for Europe.

CHAPTER VIII

COMMANDER OF THE FORCES IN IRELAND

At the end of April, 1893, Lord Roberts was once again in England, with the clear brain, wiry strength and tireless energy which had enabled him to overcome great perils and obstacles, and forty-one years' service in India had not impaired. He had as a victorious commander learnt the difficult business of war, and as Commander-in-Chief he had had practical experience in solving that most complex problem—how to alter the organisation of an old-established army so as to make it a more perfect fighting machine. What he was in India he desired to be at home—a servant of the Crown engaged in creating an army able to uphold and promote the honour, prosperity and power of England. Knowing what war is, he thoroughly realised England's state of unpreparedness to undertake a war. But there was no room in our military organisation for Lord Roberts. There was then in power a school of soldiers who could neither realise nor appreciate the merit of service in India. So Lord Roberts was for two years kept out of military employ. He was a peer of the realm, and he had to maintain the dignity and position of his rank on a pension and the scanty private fortune he had brought home. He took up his abode in a modest country house—Grove Park, Kingsbury, Middlesex—where he enjoyed what is so long denied to the Anglo-Indian exile, the companionship of his children and visits from old comrades. He received from the leading statesmen of the day marked attention, and he was courted by the great world. But he did not court it.

Commander of the Forces in Ireland

To a soldier full of zeal for his profession it was in many respects an unsatisfactory life which he was compelled to lead at this time. He was, however, of far too energetic a temperament to be idle. He had, during his long military career, taken up his work as a soldier in earnest, and not only did he apply himself to the practical duty he had to perform, but he read with close attention all the military history to which he could obtain access. He made a special study of the great campaigns which laid the foundation of British dominion in India. When he came to the Imperial Library at Calcutta, he discussed military historians. On my showing him an original letter written the night before the storming of Seringapatam, he spoke of Beatson's classic work, "A View of the Origin and Conduct of the War with Tippoo Sultaun." I reminded him that Beatson does not mention Wellington's failure to take one of the fore posts owing to the darkness of the night. He discussed Wellesley's resolve "never to suffer an attack to be made by night upon an enemy who is strongly posted, and whose posts have not been reconnoitred by daylight."

He talked another day about Thorn's "Memoir of the War in India, 1803-06," and he regretted that Wellesley's campaign in the Deccan had so completely overshadowed Lake's campaign. Laswaree was, he considered, one of the most splendid victories won in India, and has a high title to rank with Assaye. He criticised Lake somewhat severely for undertaking the siege of Bhurtpore with totally inadequate means, not only as regards the strength of his force generally, but also with respect to siege equipment. He had read Creighton's "Narrative of the Siege and Capture of Bhurtpore, 1825-26," and he remarked that every precaution which experience could suggest had been taken by that clear-headed and methodical soldier, Lord Combermere. "There is in war much less chance," he said, "than

is generally supposed." He proceeded, then, to illustrate the remark from Wellington's campaigns. He knew better than most men that remarkable series of State papers: "The Dispatches of Field-Marshal the Duke of Wellington."

Soon after his arrival in England he was asked to write a series of articles on Wellington for the *Pall Mall Magazine,* and he consented. They were afterwards published in a small volume. Written for a popular magazine and confined by strict limits of space, superficial it was bound to be. But as Sir Walter Scott says: "Better a superficial book which brings well and strikingly together the known and acknowledged facts, than a dull, boring narrative, pausing to see further into a milestone at every moment than the nature of the milestone admits." "The Rise of Wellington" is always worth reading, because it contains comments on moves made by one who has played the great game of war.

On the 18th of May, 1894, Lord Roberts wrote to me: "At the suggestion of several friends I am thinking of writing my Indian reminiscences," and he closed the letter with the following: "I want my book to be interesting and strictly accurate." In order to make it strictly accurate Lord Roberts devoted considerable time and labour to supplementing his own personal knowledge of the events by a close study of the literature of the period and a careful verification of the facts and figures. On the 19th of November he wrote: "Can you give me the actual numbers under Sir Colin Campbell's disposal at the capture of Lucknow in March, 1858? The figures given by Kaye and in the 'Life of Lord Clyde,' differ considerably." In the first week of January, 1897, appeared, "Forty-one Years in India: From Subaltern to Commander-in-Chief. By Field-Marshal Lord Roberts of Kandahar, V.C., G.C.B." The book was at once read with eager interest wherever English is spoken. The campaigns are related with a breadth and clearness which,

in those days of lengthy dispatches and cloudy writing, it is difficult to praise too highly. It would also be difficult to overstate the service which the author renders to the British nation by reminding it of the true temper and trustworthiness of one of its greatest weapons of security, the army. He makes his readers realise the worth of that portion which is recruited in India, and of the services it has rendered the Empire. He brings home to them the sepoy's patient endurance of privation and fatigue in the swamps of Burma and the snows of Afghanistan, and the steady valour displayed in many a hard-fought contest.

The peculiar charm of the book is the modest and generous spirit which, like a golden thread, runs through it. Lord Roberts describes in twelve lines the two gallant deeds for which he was awarded the Victoria Cross. The author is more anxious to refresh the memory of his old comrades at Delhi and Lucknow than to relate his own adventures, and he is liberal in the credit which he bestows on all who rendered him service when he commanded in the field. The perusal of the book first enabled the general public to realise the chivalrous devotion of the soldier for "Bobs." All who have served under him have seen that he loves soldiers, that he respects them, and that he thinks each of them capable of being a hero.

In May, 1895, Lord Roberts had been promoted to the rank of Field-Marshal, and on the 1st of October of the same year he had been appointed Commander-in-Chief in Ireland. He carried with him his old zeal for advancing the social conditions of the soldier without thus losing "the habits and the spirit of soldiers—the habits of command on one side and of obedience on the other—mutual confidence between officers and men." He realised the great change that modern inventions had made in the art of war, and he impressed upon the soldiers under his command, as he did in India, the value of straight

shooting and the necessity of fire discipline. No man is a smarter soldier than Lord Roberts, and no man has a finer eye for a smart soldier; but modern warfare demands that the soldier shall be something more than smart. A soldier, as he well points out, need not lose any of his smartness, and a regiment need not march past with any less precision because a certain portion of drill-time has been taken up by musketry. In the days of the old Brown Bess the object of a commanding officer was to make his battalion handy on parade, and the greater part of a soldier's life was taken up with barrack drill.

"The introduction of rifled arms altered all this; but it took some time to bring about the required change in the soldier's training. Officers who had been brought up in the old school clung to drill—constant drill—as the only means by which a soldier could be made efficient; they failed to appreciate the power of the rifle, nor could they understand the necessity for more time being spent on the range to admit of their men being taught to make 'bulls'-eyes' with tolerable certainty at a distance of half a mile or more. I must not be mistaken about drill—drill is an essential part of discipline; it makes the soldier understand how to obey the word of command, but there is this difference between the drill of the past and the present. Formerly, the idea was to make the men act in a compact body under the immediate command of the commanding officer, and musketry was looked upon merely as a minor sort of adjunct. *Nowadays to keep a regiment in close formation once the zone of fire is entered would be to court disaster.* Men are taught to fight in loose order, and to depend in a great degree on their own selves, and in all this the prime mover is musketry."

But, as usual with Lord Roberts, his official preoccupations were only a part of his work. He was prompt in answering the numerous letters he received; he kept up a correspondence with

leading soldiers and statesmen on military and Indian affairs; he worked hard at his book; he wrote introductions for other men's books; he read books and articles on many different subjects. There was one subject of Imperial importance which had occupied his special attention during his military career in India, and events had again brought to the front. At the close of July the papers announced that two outposts of the Empire had been attacked by a multitude of tribesmen, and the garrisons were in imminent peril. The policy to be pursued with regard to the lawless tribes that border the North-West Frontier of British dominion in India again became a theme for serious discussion.

In the spring of 1897 there appeared along the whole stretch of that wild borderland grave symptoms of unrest and disaffection which had been created and stimulated by certain influences and incidents. The most potent influence was the unloosing of old pent-up passions throughout the Mussulman population of the world. The victories of the Turks over the Greeks had rekindled the desire for a sacred war which might sweep away the infidels. These victories were grossly exaggerated and misrepresented. In the house of a fanatic in Tirah was found a manifesto stating that "the Sultan (of Turkey) had completely crushed the infidels in Europe, and had seized the approaches to India, and that the British being cut off from reinforcements, it was an auspicious moment for all Moslems to strike a blow for Islam." The Mullahs, or Doctors of the Law, of Kabul and of the frontier preached a *jehad,* or holy war, and they corresponded with the Mullahs of Delhi. Seditious societies in India fanned the flames of fanaticism. The ruler of Afghanistan wrote a book, setting forth the essential characteristics of a *jehad* as enforced in the Koran, the chief feature being the extinction of the infidel. The Amir, however, who had recently made an agreement with the British Government,

officially discredited the very idea of preaching a crusade. But he held a religious assembly at his Court, consisting of all the chief Mullahs and religious men of influence in his kingdom. Religious zeal was not the only motive which influenced the Amir. In 1893 he had signed an agreement by which he bound himself not to interfere in any way for the future with the Bajauris, Afridis, Waziris, and other frontier tribes, and also agreed that the frontier line should hereafter be laid down in detail and demarcated, whenever such demarcation was practicable and desirable, by joint British and Afghan Commissioners. In return the British Government consented not only to raise no objection to the purchase and import by His Highness of munitions of war, but promised to grant him some assistance in this respect, and the Government of India engaged to increase the annual subsidy granted to His Highness by the sum of six lakhs of rupees a year. The Amir signed the treaty, but he did not sign the official maps indicating the boundary. He disliked the boundary because he considered it damaged his authority and prestige, and he determined by all the indirect means in his power to prevent its demarcation. The rekindling of the flames of fanaticism among the border tribes suited his policy, and political circumstances had conspired to cause this state of feeling on the frontier to be intensified and worked upon. This establishment of posts on the Swat River and in the Chitral Valley, and the construction of the road which leads to Chitral through Swat territory, had naturally created a suspicion among brave tribes who loved their freedom. They knew not when the next post might be established. The time, however, has passed when the British Government can afford to regard with indifference the territories which form part of the marches of the Empire as no man's land or border Alsatias. While we respect the independence of the tribes, and do not interfere in the

management of their internal affairs, we are bound to reserve to ourselves the right of free access and the right of making roads, and, if necessary, establishing posts for the protection of those roads. In carrying out this policy causes of quarrel with wild mountaineers are bound to arise, but if we are a chivalrous nation a task of so much gravity will in the cause of civilisation be performed.

In order to keep the road open between India and Chitral a strong post was established on the Malakand Pass,* which gives access to the Swat Valley. The pass, some thirty-two miles from Marden, the headquarters of the Guides, was held by a brigade consisting of three regiments of native infantry, a battery of mountain artillery, a squadron of native cavalry, and a company of Madras sappers and miners. The position occupied by the brigade was extended and covered a considerable area, the north camp on the left of the position being nearly three quarters of a mile from the Crater camp in the centre. A strong fort some nine hundred feet above the Crater camp commanded the pass. Seven or eight miles from Malakand was the fort of Chakdara, constructed to protect the bridge across the Swat River. The garrison consisted of two companies of the Sikhs and twenty men of the 11th Bengal Lancers. Swat was peaceful, and the country had prospered since the construction of roads, when tales began to be spread regarding a Mullah, known as the "Great" or "Mad Fakir," who had arisen in the northern hills. He had a vast host of chariots and horsemen in the valleys and glens which he fed with miraculous food, and when the time came they would destroy the infidels. The Pathan sepoys warned their officers that momentous events were impending. But no one gave credence to these mysterious words. The country was

* The Malakand Pass, forty-seven miles from the military station of Nowshera.

peaceful and the inhabitants prosperous and respectful. Any outbreak would be easily crushed. A week passed by. On the afternoon of the 26th of July officers were playing polo in the valley below. At 10 p.m. the rattle of musketry was heard, and that night a multitude of tribesmen attacked simultaneously three sides of the camp. Mad with fanatical zeal, they hurled themselves against the slender defences. Some penetrated, and after a mortal tussle were driven out at the point of the bayonet. When daylight came they had failed to overcome a small garrison, widely extended, and taken by surprise. The next day the north camp was abandoned in order to contract the perimeter of defence, and the Guides, horse and foot, who had marched thirty-six miles in sixteen hours, reinforced the garrison. When darkness fell the tribesmen renewed the attack. Bands of *ghazis* charged the breastwork again and again and were repulsed with slaughter. But neither their courage nor their strength was diminished. Hundreds of recruits came to them from the hamlets and small villages in the mountain glens. Each night told the same tale. The number of officers steadily diminished, and the casualties among the sepoys increased. As the days passed, officers and men became worn out by constant watching and fighting. On the fifth night, when a blinding hurricane was blowing and the rain was falling in torrents, the enemy made a determined attempt to rush the 45th Sikhs' pickets, but were repulsed with great loss. The following day (31st July) the 35th Sikhs and 38th Dogras marched into camp, and the weary garrison had their first quiet night. The tribesmen had abandoned the attempt to take Malakand.

On the 1st of August, Brigadier-General Sir Bindon Blood, who was appointed to command the Malakand Field Force, arrived and took over charge. The first object was to relieve the garrison of Chakdara. It consisted of two companies 45th

Sikhs, under Lieutenant Rattray, Lieutenant Wheatley of the same regiment, twenty-seven of the 11th Bengal Lancers, Surgeon-Captain Hugo and Lieutenant Minchin of the 25th Punjab Infantry, the political officer. Chakdara and Malakand were attacked the same night and the same hour. The tribesmen, who made several rushes to gain an entrance into the little fort of Chakdara, standing on a mountain ridge commanding the wire bridge across the Swat, were repulsed. The next morning Captain Wright and forty sabres of the 11th Bengal Lancers, after a gallant ride, reinforced the garrison. It now consisted of five British officers, two hundred Sikhs, and sixty sabres. Against them were thousands of fanatical mountaineers, accustomed to the use of arms and ready to die. Night and day this little band were assailed, but they held the fort. On the morning of the seventh day the enemy, some eight to ten thousand in number, advanced to the assault. They were preceded by storming parties carrying ladders. The guns of the fort mowed them down. But on they went. A stream of bullets was sent from every coign of advantage against the fort, and several of the scanty garrison were killed at a supreme moment. It was impossible before so strong an onset to hold the fort. Then horsemen were seen riding over the ridge. It was the relieving column, and Chakdara was saved. The first news of the fighting at Malakand created a profound sensation in England, and the defence of the two outposts of the Empire was watched with anxious interest and attention. When the news of the relief of Chakdara reached London there was a general feeling of thankfulness. The country was told that when General Blood had, with his force, punished the Swatis, there would be no fear of further trouble on the North-West Frontier. But the flames of fanaticism are not so easily quenched.

The Mohmands, who occupy the country that lies between

the Kabul River and Swat, had no grievance against the British Government. No military road had been taken through their territory, but there lived among them a very holy man known to fame as the Hada Mullah—from Hada, a village in Afghanistan. The Amir had written of him as "a light of Islam," and he was a great friend of the Amir's Commander-in-Chief. But he hated the British with all the hate of a fanatic. He preached a *jehad*. He told the tribesmen that those who fell in fighting the infidel would gain Paradise, those who survived would reap vast riches. The Mohmands, roused by his preaching and promises, suddenly poured down the Peshawar Valley, attacked Shabkadar, a fortified post eighteen miles north-west of Peshawar, and pillaged and burnt the small old Sikh town of Shankargarh. On the 7th of August, news of the Mohmand raid reached Peshawar, and that evening a small force was sent to disperse the tribesmen. The next morning 750 men attacked the enemy, numbering about 6,000, situated in a strong position. The short grey line of infantry advanced, but having to do with superior numbers, were outflanked and had to fall back. The ranks were thinning. The position was critical, when General Ellis arrived on the field and ordered the two squadrons of the 13th Bengal Lancers to charge. Across the front they dashed, through and through the advancing hosts they rode, and drove them with severe loss into the hills. Among those slain were soldiers in the Amir's uniform.

South-west of the Mohmand country, separated from it by the Kabul river, lies a block of mountainous country where the Afridis, the most warlike of the frontier tribes, dwell. Six of the eight clans are usually known as "the Khyber tribes," and supply some of the best soldiers to our native army. Landa Khana, a fortified serai at the farther end of the Khyber Pass, was the headquarters of the Khyber Rifles—a battalion of Afridis, "very similar in organisation to a regiment of the native army."

Their commandant was Captain Barton. When the Mohmands rose, it was expected that the Afridis would follow their example, and the Peshawar authorities were urged to reinforce the garrison at Landa Khana. There were more than nine thousand troops about the Peshawar frontier, but no reinforcements were sent. Captain Barton was ordered to return to Peshawar and detained there. On August 22nd a large body of Afridis captured Ali Musjid, the famous fort inside the pass, and then invested Landa Khana. After twenty-four hours' hard and continuous fighting it was taken by assault. The Khyber Rifles remained true to their colours, and fought against their own tribesmen until they could no longer hold the fortified post. They then retreated in good order to Jamrood, where a considerable British force had been sent, and taunted our men for having left them to their fate. Nothing could be more humiliating to the British nation. The news swiftly spread that the Afridis had captured the Khyber Pass, and rumour invented imaginary glories for them. Two days after the attack on the Khyber posts the Orakzais, who occupy the mountains south of the Afridi country and north-west of the Kohat district, attacked our posts on the Samana range. They were driven away by a force from Kohat, and the garrisons were reinforced, but again the fatal policy of punishment and retirement was followed. The retiring force was closely followed by bands of tribesmen, who time after time attacked it. The Afridis and Orakzais, elated with their success, now surrounded and attacked first Gulistan and then Saraghare on the Samana. They were both held by detachments of the 36th Sikhs. Gulistan, though badly constructed for defence, and assailed by a host of fanatical warriors, was held with success. Saraghare was a little fort utterly unsuited for defence. The garrison consisted of twenty Sikh sepoys. The small band, after defending themselves with desperate gallantry,

perished to a man. Another frontier campaign on a large scale was now inevitable.

As Afghan troops had been caught red-handed in the ranks of the enemy, the Government of India addressed a remonstrance to the ruler of Kabul. Abdurrahman, according to an official statement issued at Simla on August 23rd, declared that no soldier of the Afghan army had joined the Mullahs, and solemnly undertook not to engage in, or permit, any hostilities against the Indian Government. On the 28th of August, Lord Roberts wrote: "I was delighted to read your article on the Amir in yesterday's *Pall Mall*. All the oaths he could or would take would never persuade me that he has had nothing to say to the present disturbances. As you say, he may not have *induced* the tribesmen to revolt, but had he not let it be known that their doing so would be agreeable to him, not a man would have dared to take up arms against us." There is no longer a shadow of doubt as to the Amir's original implication with the outburst. The publication of his book was the first step towards preaching a religious crusade. His Afridi agents must have informed him that the Afridis intended to attack the Khyber Pass. Ghulam Haidar, the Amir's Commander-in-Chief, was in constant communication with the Afridis, both before and after the outbreak, and anyone acquainted with Abdurrahman's cruel absolute power knows that his Commander-in-Chief would not have dared to act as he did without at least the tacit concurrence of the Amir. Lord Roberts proceeded in the letter to express his views with regard to our relations with the Amir and the border tribes in general:

"We are now reaping the fruits of years of timidity in our dealings with the Amir and the border tribesmen. They firmly believe we are afraid of them, and well they may, considering how we have permitted Abdurrahman to persistently thwart

us, and to treat us as if we were his deadly enemies, and how for years we have paid blackmail to the tribesmen in order to prevent them from raiding in our territory, and enable us to travel from one station to another on the frontier. I don't suppose that the British public are aware that, after being at Kohat and Peshawar for nearly fifty years, direct communication between the two stations is stopped at the will of the Afridis. Such a state of affairs is intolerable, but it will not be remedied until the India Office authorities are made to see that the security of our position in India depends upon our having complete control over the border men, and on the Ruler of Kabul being our humble servant. The first step to bring about these essentials is to detach the frontier from the Punjab Government, and place it under a specially selected officer, whose whole business it will be to work amongst the tribesmen. Twenty years ago Lord Lytton saw the necessity for this. After considerable objection on the part of the Punjab Government, he was able to convince Lord Salisbury, who was then Secretary of State for India, that this was the right thing to do; everything was practically settled, and when I took over the command of the Punjab Frontier Force in March, 1878, it was on the understanding that I was to be the Governor-General's agent on the frontier in a few months' time. Before the end of the year the Afghan War broke out, and for some time Lord Lytton's policy was discredited. Gradually, however, it has become apparent that he was right, and, if the question is now strongly and judiciously pressed, I hope that we shall see his admirable idea of a Frontier Commission carried out. It will be very weak of us if we allow the present opportunity to slip. Surely the existing troubles must have opened people's eyes to the fact that the border tribes are a very important factor in the frontier political problem, and that we ought to do all in our power to gain such influence

over them as will make them feel that we are their best friends, and to prevent them from readily turning against us.

"In support of what personal communication with Pathans can do to this end, I would refer to the loyal manner in which the frontier sepoys serve us, and to the admirable behaviour of the Khyber Rifles, who, according to the telegrams from India, held their posts against their own kith and kin, without having British officers to encourage them, and when overpowered by numbers made their way to the nearest British garrison."

A force consisting of no less than forty thousand troops was quickly concentrated on the frontier, and this rapid concentration was due to the important and far-reaching reforms instituted in the administration and organisation of the Indian army by Lord Dufferin, Lord Lansdowne, Sir George Chesney, and Lord Roberts—reforms which were sharply criticised at the time. Sir William Lockhart, who commanded the Punjab Frontier Force which gathered at Kohat, was appointed to lead the Tirah Expeditionary Force for the punishment of the Afridis, During his period of command on the frontier he had conducted four expeditions. He, like Lord Roberts, was no believer in "the policy of the bayonet and the firebrand," but his aim was by personal intercourse and neighbourly good offices to "make mild a rugged people, and through soft degrees subdue them to the useful and good." None the less, he held that if an aggression had to be punished, it should be done thoroughly. He harried Waziristan for months, till he made the chiefs thoroughly understand the power of the British arm. He had a profound knowledge of the Pathan character, appreciated its good points, had much sympathy for the Afghans with their love of their highlands, and admired their courage. William Lockhart was a fine example of those virtues which a soldier should possess. He was brave, unselfish, and true, and the

wild men of the frontier recognised the essentially chivalrous nobleness of his disposition.

Maidan, in the Afridi Tirah, is an oval plain, about seven or eight miles long and three or four miles wide, which lies close under the snow-bound ridges of the Safed Koh or White Range. By the camp-fires the Afridi soldier loved to boast of the beauties and fertility of Tirah, and he used to state with swelling pride that it was a virgin land which had never been desecrated by the footsteps of a foreigner. Lockhart lifted the veil from Tirah, and its glens were traversed by the British soldier. Lockhart had under him an army of 40,000 men, and he showed his military capacity by the way he handled them in a mountainous and almost impracticable country. It was the hardest bit of fighting we had done since the Crimea and the Mutiny. The storming of the heights of Dargai, and the gallantry of the Gurkhas and Gordon Highlanders, deserve to be recorded to all time in the annals of our Empire. But the war did not strike the imagination of the British nation like the Soudan campaign. The skill and bravery displayed were not sufficiently appreciated, owing to newspaper correspondents sending home sensational accounts of those insignificant, untoward incidents which must occur in a war against a brave foe, armed with modern weapons, fighting in a difficult country of which he knows every inch. Sir William Lockhart told the present writer that the Tirah campaign had revealed to him that modern weapons had revolutionised the art of war. The methods practised on the parade would not answer against an enemy accustomed from childhood to carry arms, full of resources and wiles, fighting in their own land. "But what gave me the greatest satisfaction," he added, "is the proof it afforded that the British soldier can fight as well as the British soldier fought in the Crimea or the Peninsula."

The capture of the heights of Dargai, on October 18th, was

the first serious engagement in an arduous campaign, and the concentration of the first division of the Tirah force in the Khyber on December 28th brought it to a close. The Afridis had been fought amidst their own mountains, and their country for the first time traversed by a hostile force. Lockhart had been the target of a good deal of hostile criticism, based on ignorance, and on the 29th of December Lord Roberts wrote: "I will take the first opportunity of returning thanks for the army to point out that Lockhart has done up to the present all that he intended to do, or that was expected of him. I am hopeful that the move into the Bazar Valley will settle affairs with the Afridis, but it would be madness to leave their country again."

On the 26th of February Lord Roberts wrote to me as follows regarding a speech he proposed to make in the House of Lords:

"I mean to explain the reasons which influenced the Government of India, while I was a member of it, in regard to a forward policy, and in doing so it will be impossible to avoid alluding to Russia. If there were no Russia in Asia, we should never have had to make ourselves responsible for the integrity of Afghanistan, and we need never have troubled ourselves as to whether the border tribes would fight for us or against us. I shall not say a word against the Russians—quite the contrary. I recognise the good they have done in Asia."

On the 8th of March, 1899, Lord Roberts called attention in the House of Lords to the papers recently presented to Parliament concerning British relations with the neighbouring tribes on the North-West Frontier, and the military operations undertaken against them during the years 1897-98. In the fullest House that had assembled for many years, the veteran soldier rose from the cross-benches, and in a clear voice, which showed full vigour of body and mind, he explained and de-

fended the policy which he considered ought to be pursued. Some forty years ago the policy of not interfering with the frontier tribes might have been well and prudent, but since then circumstances had completely changed.

"At that time Russia's nearest outpost was one thousand miles away; her presence in Asia was unheeded by, if not unknown to, the people in India; and we had no powerful reason for anxiety as to whether the two hundred thousand warriors on our border would fight for us or against us.

"To-day Russia is our near neighbour; her every movement is watched with the keenest interest from Peshawar to Cape Comorin; she is in a position to enter Afghanistan whenever it may seem to her convenient or desirable so to do; and the chance of her being able to attack us is discussed in every bazaar in India. We are bound in honour, bound by a solemn promise made seventeen years ago, to protect Afghanistan, and between us and that nation are these two hundred thousand fighting men, who may either make the fulfilment of that promise easy or else most difficult, if not impossible; for, if we should have to subdue these two hundred thousand warriors before going to the assistance of Afghanistan, any army we could put into the field would be used up before we could reach that country."

The crucial question to be considered was by what means could the British Government ensure that this enormous military strength might be used for it and not against it. Lord Roberts condemned in the most emphatic manner the old system of inflicting severe punishment on the border tribes and then withdrawing altogether from intercourse with them. He then proceeded to give a clear and animated account of the so-called Forward Policy. It was not the policy of an ambitious soldier desirous of conquest, acquiring territory, or subjugating races for our own aggrandisement. But the policy

which he advocated was a policy of control over the tribes within our sphere of influence, coupled with the minimum of interference with their domestic affairs. The control was to be exercised by administrators of the same stamp as John Jacob, Herbert Edwardes, Nicholson, and John Sandeman, who had by the great qualities of self-reliance and broad sympathy won the allegiance of alien and warlike races. He closed a well-constructed speech as follows:

"I conceive it to be my duty, as one who has had peculiar opportunities of making himself acquainted with our position on the North-West Frontier of India, to lay before you as clearly as I am able to do the reasons for the policy I advocate, and which seems to me to be the only policy that can ensure the safety of India. And it is for you and the nation to decide on the course to be followed. I can only venture to express my firm conviction that, whatever may be the cost of the measures I propose, the cost, to say nothing of the danger to the Empire, will be infinitely greater if we allow matters to drift until we are obliged, in order to resist aggression in Afghanistan, to hurriedly mobilise a sufficient force to subdue the hostile tribes through whose country we should have to pass before we could reach those strategical positions which it is essential we should be able to occupy without delay if we do not intend India—that brightest jewel in Great Britain's Crown—to pass out of our safe keeping."

At the close of 1898 Lord Roberts wrote an Introduction to a collection of short biographies entitled "From Cromwell to Wellington." In this paper he dwelt upon the value of railways in modern warfare, and after citing the Soudan campaign, he added:

"Again, it is not too much to say that the existence of railways on the North-West Frontier of India from Nowshera to Malakand, from Kohat to the Kuram Valley, and from

Peshawar round or through the Khyber Pass, would, in all probability, have prevented the late serious rising of the tribesmen, and their construction now would tend more than anything else to ensure their permanent pacification."

The policy which Lord Roberts so strenuously advocated was in a large measure adopted during the Viceroyalty of Lord Curzon. A North-West Frontier province, under a commissioner who is directly under the control of the Viceroy, has been created. The new frontier consists of the cis-Indus district of Hazara and the trans-Indus districts of Peshawar, Kohat, Bunnee and Dera Ismail Khan. Political officers, answerable to the commissioner, have charge of the political agencies established at Dir, Swat and Chitral, the Khyber, the Kuram, the Toche and Wara, and their system of administration approximates in practice and spirit to the traditions inherited by Lord Roberts from an illustrious line of frontier administrators. Tribesmen under British officers hold the main entrances of the North-West Frontier. The railway, as Lord Roberts suggested, was run from Nowshera to the foot of the Malakand, and there never will be again, with any prospect of success, a siege of Malakand or Chakdara. A direct road has been made from Peshawar to Kohat, and a branch railway from the mouth of the Indus to the mouth of the Kuram Valley. The railway has been constructed from Peshawar to Jamrood, and a fair cart road at the back of the hills to the north of the Khyber, giving a much-needed alternate route to Landi Kotal. The roads, physical pioneers of civilisation, have been made by the labour supplied by the tribesmen. The new policy has in a considerable measure succeeded, in spite of evident risks and difficulties, and there is every reason to suppose that the influences making for peace and civilisation will increase year by year.

On his return to Ireland Lord Roberts threw himself into

the details of military administration with characteristic zeal, sustained by diligence, sagacity, and judgment. During the winter and summer of 1899 many of his days were given to the inspection of troops in the different districts under his command. He had discovered in Ireland that the class of officers in the army who looked upon musketry as in some way antagonistic to, or at any rate quite apart from, drill was not altogether extinct, and he said without hesitation "that officers commanding districts and regiments fail in their duty if they do not do all in their power to make the troops serving under them efficient in musketry."

His plain speaking had the desired effect. At the All-Ireland Army Rifle Meeting, held at the Curragh in July, 1899, the number of entries had increased from 2,714 in the previous year to 4,140—more than half as many again. "Teams belonging to several corps in Dublin have taken the trouble to come to the Curragh weekly for the purpose of practising on these excellent ranges, and a strong contingent from almost every station in Ireland has been encamped here for some days past for the same purpose."

In the memorandum which Lord Roberts issued at the close of the Irish manœuvres, held in August, he warned artillery commanders that "good effect can seldom be expected from artillery fire at ranges over 4,000 yards. Such fire is apt to be dangerous to its own infantry if they are at close quarters with the opposing forces, not only on account of the difficulty of distinguishing friends from foes, but because the limit of the time-fuse has been reached."

The time was at hand when the rough school of war would show how wise Lord Roberts was in insisting upon the paramount importance of soldiers being able to shoot well, and of their being proficient in that combination of marksmanship and fire-control compressed in the term "musketry," and the

soundness of his warning to artillery officers was soon made manifest.

After the Irish manœuvres Lord Roberts went to Contrexeville "for a little rest and quiet and a good deal of water." On the 2nd of September he wrote to me: "I have read the Introduction, and am returning the volume of Selections * to you by this post. You will find a few pencil remarks on the margin of some of the pages." Besides the few pencil remarks, Lord Roberts sent the following notes, which are of historic interest and importance:

"Quite true. The position selected by Henry Lawrence was not an ideal one, but it was the best—in fact, the only one—which could have been defended by a small force, and which could have accommodated the large number of Europeans and Eurasians residing in and about Lucknow. It was out of the question retiring from Lucknow. Had it been attempted, not a soul would, I firmly believe, have survived.†

"Refusing to send a company of British Infantry to Allahabad because 'Dinapore must not be weakened by a single man,' shows how badly Lord Canning was advised. Allahabad at that time was of infinitely greater importance than Dinapore. It contained a large arsenal, the loss of which would have been most serious, whereas Dinapore was only required to overawe the unruly Mohammedan element in Patna.‡

"You discuss the question of whether Wheeler should have occupied the magazine or the two British Infantry barracks. The magazine was standing when I reached Cawnpore in October, 1857, and I confess I could not understand why Wheeler had not put all the women and children inside, and

* "Selections from the Letters, Dispatches, and other State Papers preserved in the Military Department of the Government of India, 1857-58." Edited by G. W. Forrest. Vols. ii. and iii. (Lucknow and Cawnpore).

† *See* Forrest, "History of the Indian Mutiny," i. 190 n.

‡ *Ibid.* i. 191 n.

stocked it with provisions. This is what Sir Henry Lawrence did with the Residency at Lucknow. He was as anxious as Wheeler was not to show an unnecessary want of confidence in the Sepoys, but, at the same time, he took every precaution to avoid disaster. At the time, I remember, it was urged that Wheeler selected the barracks because they were on the side of the cantonment nearest to Allahabad, the direction from which he expected succour. But troops from Allahabad had to march 120 miles through a disaffected country, with one large town, Futtehpore, at any rate, on the way, and it would not have tried them much more to have gone five or six miles farther. Moreover, there was no necessity for them to go through the cantonment or the city of Cawnpore. The Grand Trunk Road runs to the west of both, and the magazine was well clear on the north side of the city. What I think should have determined Wheeler to have occupied the magazine was the fact that it contained large numbers of guns and large stores of munitions of war, the possession of which made the Nana such a powerful adversary—settled the question, in fact, in his favour. Had a second Wheeler been at Lucknow, instead of a man like Henry Lawrence, we should have to mourn two terrible massacres instead of one.*

"Lord Canning was undoubtedly right in appointing Outram to the command of the Cawnpore as well as the Dinapore Division. Havelock was a gallant soldier and had seen a good deal of service, but he was no general. His attempts to force his way along the fifty miles which intervene between Cawnpore and Lucknow, with some 1,200 men and ten or twelve badly equipped field guns, were quite absurd, and only resulted in his throwing away many valuable lives. He should have remained quiet at Cawnpore, doing all he could to save his men and collect transport, until sufficient reinforcements

* "History of the Indian Mutiny," by G. W. Forrest, i. 399-400.

reached him to warrant his undertaking such a difficult operation. Then there can be no doubt that he should have acted as Outram suggested, and halted for the night in the Chuttur Munzil. He would have been near enough to the Residency to have restored confidence amongst the garrison, upon which he laid so much stress, and many valuable lives would have been saved." *

On the 27th of September, 1899, Lord Roberts wrote to me from Caux-sur-Montreux, Switzerland: "Lady Roberts and I are wandering about this lovely part of the world, and propose to be back in London on the 11th of October unless war is declared, when we shall return at once, as our son expects to be ordered out."

On the morning of the 12th of October the Boer commandoes massed on the frontier, invaded the British colony of Natal, and plunged into a carefully prepared war with England. On the 26th of October the British soldier, in the face of a murderous fire, stormed the heights of Talana Hill, and the news filled the kingdom with pride and rejoicing. But the nation was soon unpleasantly startled to find that, though a brilliant feat of arms had been achieved, the victory was barren.

The enthusiasm of the British people was sobered when news reached London that Colonel Yule, who had succeeded to the command on the fall of that gallant soldier Penn Symons, had been compelled to abandon his wounded and retreat to Ladysmith. Two hundred of our cavalry had been taken prisoners. Grave was the anxiety as to the security and junction of Yule's detachment. On the 27th of October came the welcome tidings that it had reached Ladysmith—"done up," telegraphed General White, "but in good spirits, and only needs rest." Four days later came the disaster of

* "History of the Indian Mutiny," by G. W. Forrest, ii. 2-4.

Nicholson's Nek, and Englishmen felt humiliated on hearing that 843 British soldiers had been taken prisoners. On Tuesday, the 2nd of November, the last train left Ladysmith, and that afternoon the telegraph wire was cut and all communication with the outer world broken. Thirteen thousand soldiers were shut up in a small town, situated in a hollow surrounded by hills, by a vastly superior force. Our troops were outnumbered, and our guns would have been out-ranged but for the timely arrival of four naval guns. They reached Ladysmith not three days before all communication with the outside was intercepted. On the 30th of October Sir George White telegraphed: "The enemy's guns range farther than our field guns. I have now some naval guns, which have temporarily silenced, and I hope will permanently dominate, the enemy's best guns, with which he has been bombarding the town at a distance of over 6,000 yards." The nation which allows the safety of an important province of the Empire lying on the chief route to India and Australia to depend on the casual arrival of four naval guns runs a grave risk of going to wreck. The war with the Boers was no remote and contingent danger, and it was evident that Natal, lying on the border of the Orange Free State and the Transvaal, must be exposed to the first and heaviest attack of the enemy. After the first Boer War steps should have been taken to render the frontier of Natal secure, and a vast waste of money and blood would have been avoided. It will not have been spent in vain if it teaches English statesmen to rise to an imperial conception of their duties, the first of which is to provide for the security of those portions of the earth's surface which our fathers gained at the cannon's mouth.

The blow struck at Natal was a blow struck at our splendid Empire, and the Canadian Dominion, Australia and New Zealand proved to the world that they were alike interested

in its safety and the fortunes of England. On the 9th of October the audacious ultimatum was issued; on the 30th the *Sardinia,* of the Canadian line, sailed with 1,049 officers and men from Quebec. Ships from New Zealand and Australia also, containing the vigorous children of the Mother of Nations, were speeding across the sea for Cape Town to fight her cause.

On the 31st of October General Sir Redvers Buller, who had been appointed to take chief command of the British forces in South Africa, reached Cape Town. When the war broke out there were not three thousand men of regular troops, and no artillery, in Cape Colony. The frontier of that colony, like the frontier of Natal, had never been fortified. The importance of the natural military line of the Orange River, as a foreign critic reminds us, would have been "in more military countries emphasised by corresponding works for precaution, for defence, and for movement." The subject had, however, not been quite neglected by an Imperial Government. On the shelves of the British Museum there is a blue book on the defences of Cape Colony.

About the 25th of October, 2,500 British soldiers guarded the railway bridge which spanned the Orange River. From Cape Town the Cape Railway runs north through De Aar Junction across the Orange River to Kimberley, and along the border of the Orange Free State to Mafeking and Rhodesia, north of the Transvaal. At De Aar Junction, 500 miles from Cape Town, there is a branch railway to Port Elizabeth, the most important commercial centre of the colony. From Naauwpoort Junction, on this branch line, runs another line, which, passing Colesberg, crosses the Orange River at Norval's Pont, and proceeds in almost a straight line to Bloemfontein, Johannesburg and Pretoria. Some sixty miles from Bloemfontein, at Springfontein, the railway from the Port of East

London meets it. The lines from De Aar Junction to Port Elizabeth, and from East London to Springfontein, are joined by a railway which proceeds in a curve from Port Elizabeth through Middleburg to Stormberg Junction on the East London line. About the 25th of October 800 men guarded, at De Aar Junction, stores estimated to be worth half a million pounds. On the arrival of General Buller, Stormberg Junction and Naauwpoort were evacuated, and the forces at De Aar Junction increased to 1,500 men. Buller found Kimberley and Mafeking besieged by the Boers, and Ladysmith invested by the enemy. It was generally supposed that the plan of campaign would be an invasion of the Orange Free State by the line to Bloemfontein, which would relieve the pressure on Kimberley, Mafeking, and Ladysmith. It was determined to relieve independently and simultaneously Kimberley and Ladysmith.

On the 12th of November General Lord Methuen, a gallant, daring soldier, who had in 1885 commanded a body of irregular horse in Bechuanaland, arrived at the Orange River, and proceeded to organise a column for the advance on Kimberley. On the 22nd of November he advanced with his force, numbering about 8,000 men, and after three severe actions he established himself at Modder River, twenty-five miles from Kimberley. Twenty-five miles remained to be traversed, and then the heroic garrison, who had made frequent sorties, would be relieved. Redvers Buller, whose career had been singularly distinguished, was on his way to Ladysmith. A few days sufficed to change the whole aspect of affairs. One misfortune swiftly followed on the heels of another. On the 11th of December the following telegram from General Gatacre to the general at Cape Town was made public: "Deeply regret to inform you that I have met with serious reverse in attack this morning on Stormberg." On the 14th of December

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the public mind was deeply excited by the evil tidings of the repulse at Magersfontein. Seven hundred of Britain's best and bravest soldiers had fallen into an ambush, and been swept down in five minutes by a blast of bullets. Such a disaster, following on the unexpected and startling features of the first reverse, struck a chill through the whole nation. The misfortunes of the times, however, were not yet over. On the morning of the 16th of December the War Office received a telegram from General Buller, which began as follows: "I regret to report a serious reverse." He had the preceding morning moved with an army of over 20,000 men to force the passage of the Tugela. "There are two fordable places on the Tugela, and it was my intention to force a passage through one of them. They are about two miles apart, and my plan was to force one or the other with one brigade supported by a central brigade. General Hart was to attack the left drift, General Hildyard the right road, and General Lyttelton in the centre to support either." Early in the morning General Hart's column was forced to retire, after the leading battalion, the Connaught Rangers, who had displayed conspicuous gallantry, had suffered heavily. Sir Redvers Buller then ordered General Hildyard to advance, which he did, and his leading regiment, the East Surrey, occupied Colenso Station and the houses near the bridge. At the moment when they were preparing to advance on the ford, Sir Redvers Buller heard that the whole of the artillery which he had sent to support that attack—"namely, the 14th and 66th Field Batteries, and six naval 12-pounder quick-firing guns, the whole under Colonel Long, R.A.—were out of action, as it appears that Colonel Long, in his desire to be within effective range, advanced close to the river. It proved to be full of the enemy, who suddenly opened a galling fire at close range, killing all the horses, and the gunners were

compelled to stand to their guns." They stuck to them manfully until the ammunition in the limbers was exhausted, and they were compelled to leave them in the place and retreat for shelter to a donga. On Buller's arrival, teams were harnessed, and desperate rushes made to remove the guns. But the fire was too deadly, and only two were removed. In that gallant rush Lieutenant Frederick Roberts, Lord Roberts's only son, was mortally wounded, and he insisted on being left where he fell, for fear he should hamper the others. It is impossible to conceive circumstances more honourable and glorious than those under which Frederick Roberts lost his life in the cause of his country. "We have retired to our camp at Chieveley," were the last words of General Buller's telegram.

On Saturday, December 16th, over England the clouds hung dense and black. But there was no despondency. A spirit of fervid patriotism filled the hearts of the nation, and found responsive throbs in every corner of the vast Empire. England resolved to maintain its own with its hand upon the sword, and by bonds of sympathy and ties of a common cause her far-off dependencies were welded into one, and Imperial Federation, the dream of statesmen, became a fact. From Canada, Australia, and New Zealand poured offers of further contingents, which were gratefully accepted by the Government, who promptly gave practical and effective expression to the voice of the nation. They determined that all the remaining portions of the Army Reserve should be called out at once, that the 7th Division, then in course of mobilisation, should be dispatched to the seat of war without delay, as well as reinforcements of artillery, including a howitzer brigade. Nine battalions of our most ancient constitutional force, the Militia, would be allowed to volunteer for service outside of the United Kingdom, and an equivalent additional number of

Commander of the Forces in Ireland

Militia battalions were to be embodied at once. The Government also appealed to the feeling of chivalry which has always spurred on our race by resolving to send a strong force of picked volunteers from the Yeomanry and a strong contingent of Volunteers selected with care. With gallantry and noble disinterestedness men of all classes responded to the appeal. On Sunday, the 17th of December, it was announced that Lord Roberts would be sent to South Africa as Commander-in-Chief, and would be accompanied by Lord Kitchener as Chief of the Staff. The tidings called forth a general burst of approval, for men felt that the army in South Africa required the soul of a commander.

CHAPTER IX

THE BOER WAR: RELIEF OF KIMBERLEY

On the bleak winter morning of the 23rd of December, 1899, hundreds had assembled on the platform of Waterloo Station to say good-bye to Lord Roberts, who was about to leave England at his country's call, again to command an army in the field. The Prince of Wales and the Duke of Cambridge, as well as the Duke of Connaught, who, at the beginning of the war, had begged in a pressing form to be employed in South Africa, were among those present. So were Lord Lansdowne, the Secretary of State for War, Mr. Arthur Balfour, and the other leaders of both parties in both Houses, and soldiers of eminence who had shared with Roberts the perils of the mortal struggle at Delhi and Lucknow and the hardships and dangers of Afghanistan. Foremost among them was the noble warrior, Donald Stewart, who had taken the risk of sending him on the splendid march from Kabul to Kandahar. Speaking about Lord Roberts's Indian career, and his fitness for the great task he had undertaken, Donald Stewart said to me: "On one point there is not the least doubt—he is a genius on the battlefield, and will do this job well." The neat, wiry figure, dressed in civilian clothes, was seen walking up the platform. No uniform gave colour to the spectacle. It was no military ceremony, full of pomp and show, but a simple, deep, and moving scene. Almost all the vast crowd were in black, a befitting tribute to the great soldier who, past the most energetic years of manhood, nerved him-

self against a great sorrow, and resolvedly was going forth to retrieve his country's fortunes. When the train began to move out of the station the enthusiasm of the crowd could no longer be restrained, and loud cheers arose. The veteran mounted the steps of the saloon carriage, already in motion, with the alacrity of youth, and acknowledged the sympathetic acclamations. Again and again cheers were raised, till the train was lost to sight, and there was a stir in all hearts.

On the 26th of December Lord Roberts arrived at Gibraltar, where he was met by Major-General Lord Kitchener of Khartoum, Sirdar of the Egyptian Army, who had been appointed Chief of the Staff. Twenty-eight years before Horatio Herbert Kitchener had obtained a commission in the Royal Engineers, and as a subaltern employed in the Palestine and Cyprus Surveys had proved himself to be an energetic and careful worker. When a captain, ambition led him to Egypt, and for two years he commanded Egyptian cavalry. In the Nile Expedition and the Khartoum Expedition he showed that he possessed in the highest degree the gifts of a great organiser —indefatigable, diligent, careful of details and firm in having them executed with absolute minuteness. Lord Kitchener was at Khartoum, engaged in introducing order and sound administration in the provinces conquered by the army he had organised, when, at Lord Roberts's own request, the Cabinet recommended to the Queen that he should be appointed Chief of the Staff. Kitchener, on hearing of his appointment, left Khartoum at once (December 18th), and with characteristic energy reaching Alexandria in three days, went on board the cruiser *Isis,* which anchored before the Rock about the same time as the *Dunottar Castle,* having on board the Commander-in-Chief.

On the 28th of December Lord Roberts reached Madeira, and two days later he wrote to me from the *Dunottar Castle*—

"We are due at Cape Town on the 10th of January, and I shall set to work at once to get hold of the various threads, and arrange my plans for the future. This will necessarily take time, and I hope that the British public will not be impatient if they do not hear of anything being done very quickly. I shall not move until I am ready, and the more carefully I am able to prepare, the quicker and more satisfactory will be the result."

On the 10th of January Lord Roberts landed at Cape Town. He had first to study a rare and complex problem and form a sure judgment. Methuen and Cronje were facing one another on the Modder River. General French, with three cavalry regiments and a battalion and a half of infantry, was holding the line from Naauwpoort to Rensberg, on the road to Bloemfontein. Gatacre was with two batteries of artillery and four and a half battalions of infantry at Sterkstrom, protecting the country in its vicinity and the line to Port Elizabeth. Buller had fallen back on Chieveley to await reinforcement by the 5th Division, under Lieutenant-General Sir Charles Warren. On the date of Lord Roberts's arrival at the Cape Sir Redvers Buller had made his dispositions for the second attempt to relieve Ladysmith. Taking this fact into consideration, and also the distance of his headquarters from Natal, Lord Roberts determined to leave General Buller "a perfectly free hand and not to interfere with his operations." Buller, after being reinforced by the 5th Division, informed the Commander-in-Chief that "his task would not be rendered easier by a further addition to the number of his troops." Moreover, Lord Roberts had no troops to spare. "The frontier of Cape Colony was weakly held, and the attitude of a portion of the colonials bordering the Orange Free State was in some cases doubtful, and in others disloyal." The Commander-in-Chief felt that to preserve the doubtful, to silence the discontented, to raise

the spirits of all, he must strike a decisive blow. The war must be carried into the enemy's country. Two plans of campaign presented themselves to the mind of Lord Roberts. The first plan consisted in advancing from Naauwpoort Junction, through Colesberg, direct to Bloemfontein. The country around Colesberg is, however, covered with hills, and exactly suited to the tactics adopted by the Boers. They also held the points where the roads crossed the Orange River, "and it seemed certain that the bridges over that river would be destroyed if the enemy could be forced to retire to the northern bank." This plan had also the further disadvantage of being mainly dependent on a single line of railway, and the movement of an army solely by means of a line of railway is, as Lord Roberts states, most tedious and practically impossible. Lord Roberts makes the same criticism regarding the value of a railway in an operation of war that Wellington made in an unpublished minute regarding a river, when it was proposed to rely solely on the use of the Indus for the transport of an army of invasion. A river, or a railway, as the two great commanders state, is of the greatest assistance to an army for the conveyance of stores and supplies from the base, and is therefore a most valuable adjunct; but even then a certain proportion of the troops must be equipped with wheel or pack transport to enable supplies to be collected, and to render the force sufficient mobile to deal with the many tactical difficulties which must arise.

The second plan which suggested itself, and was adopted, was to use the Cape Railway for massing troops north of the Orange River Station—an excellent advance base for operations. From thence these could be forwarded to the Modder camp. At the Modder camp Lord Roberts knew he would find a large amount of supplies and transport, which would be available for any strategic movement away from the railway. His first

object was the relief of Kimberley, whose flashlight told of the daily danger of surrender. It could not hold out longer, he was informed, than the 15th of February. "On the relief of Kimberley being accomplished," he wrote to the Secretary of State for War on the 6th of February, "I propose to leave a moderate garrison at that place, and with the remainder of the force to move eastward for the purpose of threatening Bloemfontein, and seizing some point on the railway between that place and Springfontein. This operation will, I trust, cause the Boers to reduce the force which they have concentrated round Ladysmith, and enable our garrison there to be relieved before the end of February." Lord Roberts calculated that if by a strategical movement he turned the enemy's position at the Modder and relieved Kimberley, Cronje would quit his position in front of Methuen's forces, and Roberts would attack him as soon as possible after he came out of his entrenchments.

On the 7th of February a siege gun, known as "Long Tom," began to burst its shells over the town of Kimberley, and this seriously alarmed the inhabitants. On the 9th of February, Cecil Rhodes, who when the war broke out had sought shelter in the town, informed Colonel Kekewich, the commander of the garrison, that he desired to hold a public meeting to discuss the situation. This was most properly forbidden by that officer. Kekewich came to the conclusion that Rhodes intended to advise the citizens to surrender. He therefore on the 9th signalled a special report to Lord Roberts conveying that impression. The Commander-in-Chief signalled on the 10th to Kekewich the following message, to be delivered to the inhabitants of the town: "Many days cannot possibly pass before Kimberley will be relieved, as we commence active operations to-morrow. Our future military operations depend in a large degree on your maintaining your position a very

short time longer, and our prestige would suffer severely if Kimberley were to fall into the hands of the enemy." Lord Roberts was well fitted by training and temperament to deal successfully with an attempt to dictate to a responsible authority. He sent a cipher telegram to Kekewich, authorising him to make the fullest use of his powers under martial law to forbid any meeting, and to put Rhodes under arrest if necessary. A private meeting had, however, been held before the message reached the commander, and a summary of the remonstrance drawn up by the leading inhabitants was signalled by Kekewich to Lord Roberts:

"Mr. Rhodes and other leading inhabitants held private meeting to-day before Field-Marshal's two messages arrived. Rhodes called at my office this afternoon, presenting lengthy document for communication by flash to you. Summary of same as follows: 1st, Answer required whether immediate effort is being made to relieve Kimberley; 2nd, Duration siege, shortness of food, hardships endured, disease prevalent, strongly represented; 3rd, Consternation, destruction of life and property caused by enemy's siege guns pointed out; 4th, Their views military situation stated."

Lord Roberts, taking into consideration the demoralisation which the remonstrance revealed, and the disastrous political effect which surrender would produce, determined that an immediate attempt should be made to relieve Kimberley. On the evening of the 10th, the Commander-in-Chief, accompanied by the Chief of the Staff, visited the camp of the Cavalry Division, and addressed a meeting of the brigadiers and commanding officers.

"I have asked General French to call you together," he said, "as I want to tell you that I am going to give you some very hard work to do; but, at the same time, you are to get the greatest chance cavalry has ever had. I am certain you

will do well. I have received news from Kimberley, from which I know that it is important the town should be relieved in the course of the next five days, and you and your men are to do this. The enemy have placed a big gun in position, and are shelling the town, killing women and children, in consequence of which the civilian population are urging Colonel Kekewich to capitulate. You will remember what you are going to do all your lives, and when you have grown to be old men you will tell the story of the relief of Kimberley. My intention is for you to make a detour, and get on the railway north of the town. The enemy are afraid of the British cavalry, and I hope when you get them into the open you will make an example of them."

Lord Roberts, after the meeting, told General French that his belief was that the advance on Kimberley would cause Cronje to quit his position in front of Methuen's force, and that it was his intention to attack him as soon as possible after he came out of his entrenchment. A few hours after French started for the Riet, Lord Roberts arrived at Ramdam, and sent forward, at 7 A.M., the 7th Division to De Kiel's Drift, its place being taken by the 6th Division under Lieutenant-General Kelly-Kenny, who had moved by rail to Graspan. Three hours later the advance guard reached Waterval Drift. After a brief halt, the division again set forth, and the soldiers fresh from England suffered much from the choking dust, the burning sun, and the lack of water. When they reached De Kiel's Drift, they found it to be impracticable for wagons, but another ford was discovered a mile and a half to the eastward, and the transport of the 7th Division began to cross to the north bank. The river was shallow, but the banks were steep and sandy, and great was the delay and confusion in getting the transport across. At 7 P.M. the Chief of the Staff arrived, and found a confused mass of wagons struggling to reach the ford. He

telegraphed to Lord Roberts that delay was unavoidable, and that the cavalry patrols had failed to find any water to the north of the Riet. The Commander-in-Chief therefore decided that the 7th Division should remain at De Kiel's Drift, to cover the passage of the transport, but that French should continue his move towards Kimberley, seize a drift over the Modder, and establish his brigades on the far bank. He ordered the 6th Division, with Hannay's brigade, to march to Waterval Drift.

Owing to the transport difficulty it was nearly 10 A.M. on Tuesday morning, the 13th, before all the horses had fed, and the gallopers were sent off to each brigadier to order the advance. Beneath a scorching sun the division rode off in line of brigade masses with wide intervals, the artillery being placed in the inner flanks of the brigades. In the rear followed the ammunition columns, guarded by Alderson's brigade of mounted infantry. Lord Roberts had ridden over that morning to watch the start, and the heart of every soldier was filled with joy at the opening of the long-delayed relief of Kimberley, and with devotion to the little man who had come to wish them God-speed.

Some twenty-five miles of almost waterless, sandy veld lay between French's cavalry and Rondeval * Drift, the nearest ford on the Modder. After marching for two hours, they came to a farm† where a well was found. A squadron of Kitchener's Horse having been left to guard it until the infantry division arrived next day, French, after an hour's halt, resumed his march. General Gordon, with the left brigade, led the advance. The centre brigade, under General Broadwood, was deployed to the right. The brigade under Colonel Alexander

* Thus in the "Official History."

† "Blaauwboschpan Farm, eight miles north-east of De Kiel's Drift, was reached at 12.30 p.m. Here was found a well which, it was estimated, would afford water for an infantry brigade."—"Official History of the War in South Africa," vol. ii., p. 25.

followed in the rear. In this order they rode on through the hot day, with nothing in sight except the vast arid plain studded with hills. About 2 P.M. a party of Boers, who had seized some kopjes near Rooidam, fired on Gordon's brigade. The kopjes were small, but of strategic importance, because they in some measure commanded the track leading to the drifts across the Modder. Almost straight north in the line of French's march was Rondeval Drift, the most western of these fords; three miles east of it, up stream, was Klip Drift; beyond it, at the end of a bend of the river, Drieputs Drift; then Klip Kraal Drift, eight miles almost due east of Rondeval Drift. A few shells from the Horse Artillery dislodged the Boer scouts, and the march was continued. But the commando * continued to march parallel to the British right flank. French had no means of ascertaining its strength. From the reports brought to him on the march, he thought they might attack him on his flank when he was engaged in crossing the Modder. French is a skilful war-captain, and he followed a manœuvre devised by Frederick the Great. He ordered the 1st and 2nd Brigades to change their course to the north-east—so taking a direct line for Klip Kraal Drift—and the 3rd Brigade to continue its march northwards towards Rondeval Drift. An hour and a half later French and his staff saw from a little stone-covered knoll the river and its green banks. They were also delighted to discover a crowd of Boers hastening across the drift at Klip Kraal. The feint had proved a success. French promptly turned again the 1st and 2nd Brigades sharp to the north-west, straight in the direction of Klip Drift. The order was given: Broadwood's brigade (the 2nd), with Alexander's brigade (1st) in support,† to make a dash on Klip

* Commando, a Boer military force of any size, usually the fighting force of one district.

† Porter's brigade for the day under the command of the senior Regimental Officer—Lieut.-Colonel the Hon. W. Alexander, 2nd Dragoons.

Drift, and Gordon's (the 3rd) to continue its advance on Rondeval Drift. The drift must be reached and forced before the enemy had time to gather and defend positions strong by nature. But men and horses were worn out by heat and thirst, and the artillery teams could scarcely drag their guns and carriages. General Gordon, on the left, and General Broadwood, five miles to his right, started at once. "Colonel Alexander's brigade was far in the rear; he had already lost sixty horses, and the rest could move but slowly."* Gordon and Broadwood pushed on their jaded horses, and took the enemy by surprise. The former reached Rondeval Drift, and, after shelling it for some time, crossed the river and seized the kopjes on the west. Meanwhile Broadwood, with the 12th Lancers, had rushed Klip Drift, pursued the surprised foe over some kopjes far into the plain, until he was met by a heavy fire from a large Boer laager five miles from the Modder River towards Jacobsdal. Tired and sun-weary, the pursuit was abandoned, and that night all the brigade and most of the guns held the north bank of the Modder River with the adjacent kopjes.

The successful march to the Modder River was a feat of which French and his cavalry had every reason to be proud. Here they had to wait for infantry. Lord Roberts pushed them on as rapidly as possible. In pursuance of the orders of the Commander-in-Chief, the 6th Division, with Hannay's Mounted Infantry, marched on the 13th nine miles from Ramdam to Waterval Drift. The same evening Lord Roberts rode over to Waterval Drift and asked General Kelly-Kenny if his men were fit to march that night eleven miles to Wegdraai, whence one more march would carry them to the Modder. Kelly-Kenny replied in the affirmative. At 1 A.M.

* "The Cavalry Rush to Kimberley," by Captain Cecil Boyle, The *Nineteenth Century*, June, 1900.

on the 14th the 6th Division and the 4th and 5th Regiments of Mounted Infantry set out from Waterval Drift. Lord Kitchener, who had been to Waterval during the afternoon, was ordered by Lord Roberts to accompany the column. Slowly the troops went forward, carefully reconnoitring, and Wegdraai was not reached until after a nine hours' march. Kitchener at once sent forward a staff officer to report on General French's situation, and on his return he learnt from him that "although not seriously molested, the cavalry division was being watched from the north by Froneman's force, which, placed athwart the line of advance from the Modder on Kimberley, showed signs of an intention to envelop the British flank. Though the infantry of the 6th Division had already made a nine hours' march, the Chief of the Staff feared that any delay would give the Boers time to strengthen, both by entrenchment and reinforcement, the ground they held, and render its capture a costly task. When he pointed out to General Kelly-Kenny that the execution of the Commander-in-Chief's plans required a special effort, that general once more started his infantry and naval guns."* And notwithstanding their long and fatiguing tramp, the British soldiers marched off again, and through dense darkness and drenching storms of rain pushed on across the veld and reached the drift about 1 A.M. on the 15th. It was a fine performance. They had covered, including detours, about twenty-seven miles in twenty-three hours.†

* "Official History of the War," vol. ii., p. 31. "*The Times* History of the War," vol. iii., p. 391, states: "On arrival at Wegdraai, Kitchener had sent forward a staff officer to French, to inform him that he intended moving on to join him with the Sixth Division early next morning. French sent back to ask if the move could not be executed that same night, as he did not wish to lose another day before starting for Kimberley. Kitchener at once replied in the affirmative."

† The "Official History," vol. ii., p. 31. "*The Times* History" states: "24 miles in the 24 hours." The German General Staff wrote, "The division covered about fifty kilometres (32 miles) in twenty-four hours—a first-rate

At 8 A.M. on the 15th the Cavalry Division assembled near Klip Drift. The 6th Division had occupied the semi-circular position held by them on the heights between the two drifts. Patrols were sent out, and soon succeeded in determining the strength of the enemy's position; for the Boers, contrary to their usual custom, immediately opened fire at long range. Owing to the information he had received, General French ordered into action on the heights of the northern banks all his seven Horse Artillery batteries, to which were now attached the two batteries of the 6th Division, with two heavy 12-pounder naval guns. At a range "of about 2,000 metres" the artillery opened fire on the Boer position, and swiftly silenced their three guns. At the same time the infantry of the 6th Division advanced against the Boers on the heights to the north of the river. But French had no thought of pressing the attack there. He had quite another programme laid. In the centre of the Boer position was a saddle, "1,200 metres (1,000 yards) broad," which connected two kopjes. It was unoccupied, but could be swept by a storm of bullets from the kopjes on its flanks. French's daring intention was to gallop across that saddle, supported by an overwhelming artillery fire. The story of the gallant gallop has often been told, but never with greater vigour and accuracy than by the German historians:

"Shortly after 9 A.M. French summoned his three brigadiers and informed them of his plan. He ordered the 3rd Brigade, Gordon, (as the first line), with horses at five to six paces interval, to charge right through the enemy's position over the saddle in a northerly direction. The 2nd Brigade, Broadwood, drawn up in line, was to follow, at a distance of 500

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marching performance, considering the heat, the want of water, and the exertions of the preceding days, especially as only a few stragglers remained behind."—*Blackwood,* vol. 177, p. 486.

metres, in support; while the 1st Brigade, Porter, with the mounted infantry and the horse batteries, which were ordered to continue firing till the last moment, was to follow as third line.

"The two front brigades deployed at once, and the mass of riders, soon hidden in great clouds of dust, dashed forward in a steady gallop into the enemy's fire. The commander of the division rode at the head of the 2nd Brigade. A magnificent spectacle displayed itself before the eyes of the 6th Division in the rear. Everyone held his breath. It was a moment of intense anxiety. Would not the bold adventure end with the complete destruction of the brave mass of cavalry? Yet the movement succeeded before the spectators had time to grasp the gravity of the situation. After the mighty clouds of dust raised by more than 6,000 horses had somewhat subsided, the three brigades were seen re-forming about 1,500 metres on the other side of the enemy's position. The way to Kimberley was open. It seemed a miracle that the division had ridden right through the enemy's fire almost without injury. The casualties amounted only to sixteen dead and wounded (among them an officer), and about thirty horses were disabled. This strikingly small loss, which fell almost exclusively on the first line, with fifteen dead and wounded, is to be explained chiefly by the great rapidity of the movement, in consequence of which the enemy were completely taken by surprise. The rapid pace at which this mass of riders pressed forward made such a powerful impression on the Boers that some of them fled before the cavalry came within effective range. The marksmen who stood firm, in their excitement shot too high. Moreover, they had, contrary to their usual custom, taken up their position, not at the foot of the heights, but on the summit. Besides, the cavalry were hidden in such a dense cloud of dust that a more accurate

aim was out of the question. The effective preparation and support of the artillery materially contributed to the success of the attack. According to the account of a Boer who took part in the battle, the fire of the English artillery was so effective that it was scarcely possible for the marksmen to shoot at the cavalry as they galloped forward. French's cavalry charge is one of the most remarkable events of the campaign. It was the first and only time in the war that such a large body of cavalry was employed against infantry. Its brilliant success makes the participation of cavalry in battle, even against modern rifles, in no way a hopeless undertaking. But it must be admitted that there is a great difference between charging a strong body of infantry in front, who are keeping up a hot fire, and occasionally charging through an isolated thin line of skirmishers." *

That evening French telegraphed to the Chief of the Staff: "Entered Kimberley at 6 P.M.," and the message of glad tidings was forwarded to Lord Roberts, who had advanced his headquarters to Wegdraai, accompanied by the 9th Division. His daring strategy had been crowned with success by the skill and swiftness with which French had put the bold movement into execution, and the pluck and endurance of the British soldier. The Cavalry Division and the Horse Artillery had in four days covered a distance of ninety miles, and by a gallant rush relieved Kimberley. In four days the infantry had marched across a veld of deep sand without water. "The men never faltered. Some fell out of the ranks from sheer exhaustion; but these, as soon as they had sufficiently recovered, seized the first opportunity to rejoin their companions. It was perhaps a finer sight than any battle to see the battalions moving through the heavy sand under a

* "German Official Account of the War in South Africa." Translated by Colonel W. H. H. Waters, p. 147.

broiling sun, every man determined, persevering and cheerful. Not a murmur was heard, and the whole force was animated by a giant faith in their commander." On Sunday morning their commander began the movement, and on Thursday night it was completed. Lord Methuen held Cronje in front at Magersfontein, and French, with his Cavalry Division, was in his rear. General Colvile's Division was close at hand, ready to move wherever required, and General Kelly-Kenny's Division held the Klip and Rondeval Drifts in the Modder twenty miles east of the Boer army. Cronje, who did not think an English general could leave the railway, saw that he had been completely out-manœuvred. If he remained, he must be surrounded and starved. If he retreated north, he must, as Lord Roberts had carefully planned, be pursued by French and Methuen. The capital of the Orange Free State would be at the mercy of his opponent. He therefore determined to make a dash east to Bloemfontein, hoping to slip between French at Kimberley and Kelly-Kenny at the Klip Drift.

When Roberts moved his headquarters to Wegdraai, his intention was to occupy Jacobsdal with the 7th Division and send on a brigade to the drift. Jacobsdal was of considerable strategical importance, because short new lines of communication could be opened with Modder Camp. Roberts, however, had just reached Wegdraai when he got a message stating that the Boers were attacking the supply park, which had to be left at Waterval under the protection of a small rearguard, owing to the oxen being entirely worn out. The Field-Marshal at once ordered back three companies of the 7th Mounted Infantry, the 18th Field Battery, and the 1st King's Own Scottish Borderers from the 14th Brigade. When the first reinforcements arrived an attempt was made to move the convoy, but the Boers opened a warm shell fire, the oxen

stampeded, and the Kafir drivers bolted. Urgent messages now reached Lord Roberts that the Boers had been reinforced and the troops he had sent were not sufficient to repel their attack. He at once ordered Lieutenant-General Tucker to return to Waterval with the 62nd Field Battery and the remainder of the 14th Brigade. When Tucker reached the scene of action at dusk he found the Boers, who had been further reinforced, holding a strong, well-covered position. He sent a message to headquarters stating that at least two more battalions and a battery would be required to make sure of success. But Lord Roberts felt that it would be a grave mistake to send more troops to fight at Waterval, in order to save a convoy, when every available unit might at any moment be required at Klip Drift or near Kimberley. Jacobsdal had been carried that afternoon by our troops after a slight resistance. It was gathered from the prisoners that the greatest uneasiness prevailed in Cronje's commandos. A deserter stated that the last order he had received was, "Every man for himself; we will meet the other side of Kimberley." Late in the afternoon the Commander-in-Chief got a message from Klip Drift stating, "Boers in considerable numbers are passing from Magersfontein across our front, whether to hold us or moving on is not known." Lord Roberts felt convinced that the time had come when he would have the opportunity of dealing a felling blow. The news of the relief of Kimberley confirmed the impression. Cronje must now move. Roberts came to the fearless decision that he would abandon the convoy, with its supplies. He sent the following message to Tucker:

"*15th February*, 1900.

"If you find you cannot get the convoy away, leave it, destroying all you can, but bring the men back. I am most

anxious that you should be in camp by daylight without further loss of life. General French was at the Club, Kimberley, this evening. Most important that you should return."

After midnight Lord Roberts sent another message directing that the wagons should be destroyed "as well as you may be able." But as Tucker was ordered to be in camp by daylight he had no time to destroy them. He started as soon as possible, and reached Wegdraai about 5 A.M. Friday morning, the 16th of February.

At daybreak the same morning Hannay's brigade—now consisting of the 2nd, 4th, and 5th Mounted Infantry, New South Wales Mounted Infantry, and a detachment of Rimington's Guides—marched for Kimberley, followed by the 81st Field Battery and the 13th Brigade, the whole under the command of Major-General C. Knox. When the mounted infantry approached the nek across which French's brigade had charged the previous day, they saw great clouds of dust moving eastward. It was Cronje's army and convoy. The officer commanding the naval guns on the kopjes above Klip Drift had also observed the long line of wagons trekking eastward, and reported the matter to the lieutenant-general. Kelly-Kenny at once ordered Knox to change direction and follow the enemy. The mounted infantry and the 13th Brigade changed direction and went in pursuit. They soon came up with the rearmost wagons, for the Boers and their oxen were tired with the long night's march of thirty miles from Magersfontein. Finding their wagons were being captured, the Boer main rearguard * turned round and occupied the southern knolls of the eastern kopjes, which stretch from the nek, in a south-easterly direction, to within

* "The Official History of the War in South Africa," vol. ii., p. 82. The account given in the "Official History" differs considerably from that given in "*The Times* History," vol. iii., p. 404.

rifle-shot of the loop of the river.* Knox, in order to turn the left flank of the Boers, ordered Hannay to push his way through this gap, and, the order reaching him, he led the mounted infantry towards it. But they had not gone far when a field gun and pom-pom opened a terrific and accurate fire, and they had to seek the shelter of the river.† Knox determined to make another attempt to turn the enemy's left flank by sending some of his troops across the river to work round them, whilst he demonstrated against their centre with the 2nd Battalion the Buffs. About 9 A.M., whilst the Oxfordshire Light Infantry was converging under heavy fire upon the enemy's left flank, the Buffs advanced slowly and steadily across the plain and took possession of the ridge. There was little opposition, for the Boers' rearguard had attained its object—the convoy was safely in laager at Klip Kraal Drift. The commandants of the rearguard, then steadily falling back, had taken up strong positions on a second ridge in front of Klip Kraal Drift. "Their right and centre rested on a kopje about a mile to the west of Klip Drift, and faced west and south; their left ran from this hill, along a series of knolls, until it reached Klip Kraal." The tactics which were employed

* "From the nek across which French's brigades had charged, this ridge, called Drieputs Kopjes, stretches away in a south-easterly direction to within rifle-shot of the loop of the river."—The "Official History of the War in South Africa," vol. ii., p. 82.

† "The Official History" states the mounted infantry were driven back "in some degree of confusion." "*The Times* History" states, "The Boers, bringing a gun and a pom-pom into play, redoubled their fire on the splendid stationary target now presented to them. A moment later a great part of the mounted infantry bolted headlong in a broken mass for the cover of the river bank in rear. Charging over the steep bank, they were thrown into yet more inextricable confusion, and the river-bed for half a mile or more was a seething mêlée of men and horses struggling in the deep current, hopelessly bogged in the treacherous edge of the 'Mud' River, or scrambling about under the bank. Fortunately the Boers made no attempt to follow up their success, but, even as it was, large numbers of horses were drowned, and the whole mounted infantry force completely disorganised."—"*The Times* History," vol. iii., pp. 405-406.

in clearing the first ridge were again adopted. The Gloucestershire, West Riding, and the Buffs went across the plain and attacked the western and centre position; but they could not dislodge the Boers, who stubbornly held their ground from noon till dusk. The Oxfordshire Light Infantry recrossed the river, and whilst they advanced against the southern front of a kopje the 81st Battery engaged the Boer artillery. But when they came within musketry range the enemy opened fire, and a continuous stream of bullets brought them to a halt. The 6th Mounted Infantry, leaving their horses in the bed of the river, came to their support. But they were unable to advance farther. Nor did better fortune befall the attempts to envelop the left flank. The Mounted Infantry Brigade, with the 76th Field Battery, proceeded up the south bank until it reached some rising ground south-west of Klip Kraal Drift. The guns were taken up the knoll, but before they were unlimbered the Boers opened so heavy a musketry fire from the river that the battery had to be taken back to the foot of the rise. "Then the guns were run by hand up the hither slope, and opened on the laager from a position far enough back from the crest to be screened from the fire of the riflemen in the river-bed. Their shells so annoyed the Boers that, at about 4 P.M., under cover of a dust storm, Roos' burghers made a vigorous counter-attack, and drove in the escort. The guns, which had hardly any rounds left in the limbers, were assailed by two pieces of Boer artillery, and had to fall back, covered in their retirement by Hannay's Mounted Infantry." *

Night was now falling, and the troops, worn out with fighting since dawn, bivouacked on the ground they held.

* "Official History of the War," vol. ii., pp. 85 and 86. "*The Times* History of the War" (vol. iii., p. 407) states: "The mounted infantry fell back in some confusion, and the battery was compelled to follow."

The Boers, by the best of skill, had baffled their pursuers. Soon after dark Cronje started again from the Klip Kraal Drift, with the intention of crossing at Vendutie Drift, and so reach by a short march the direct road from Jacobsdal to Bloemfontein. At midnight the main body of the convoy, with its horses and oxen exhausted, its men utterly worn out with marching and fighting, and hampered by women and children, arrived near Paardeberg Drift, where they rested for four hours. Posting a rearguard on Paardeberg, a conical hill north of the drift, the convoy crept slowly on five miles farther up the river, and about 8 A.M. the Boers outspanned at Wolvekraal, near the Vendutie Drift, in order again to rest their oxen before crossing the river by the ford.

On the 16th of February as the dawn was breaking, Lord Roberts moved his headquarters from Wegdraai to Jacobsdal. Soon after his arrival a rumour reached him that Cronje had evacuated Magersfontein. He at once telegraphed to Lord Kitchener: "I am afraid a good many Boers will escape unless French can send some of his cavalry, guns and mounted infantry along the Bloemfontein trade road. The report here is that Magersfontein has been abandoned. I am inquiring." An hour after dispatching this message he received telegrams from Kelly-Kenny and Kitchener, stating that Cronje was moving eastward. He sent back a message to Kelly-Kenny: "Push pursuit all you can, and try to get supplies from the country. I have told French to sweep round to the south-east. Every hour of pursuit now is worth days afterwards." The message he sent French was as follows:

"Kelly-Kenny's division is in touch with Boer convoy, supposed to be Cronje's, near Paardeberg Drift, and he and Kitchener think that if you would move in a south-easterly direction, *viâ* Boschvarkfontein, you might cut it off. You would be in a good position on that route for interrupting the

enemy's troops recently at Kimberley, which, like Cronje's, are evidently making for Bloemfontein. Better not go farther east than Petrusberg, without orders from me. It would be a glorious finish if you can get the 6-inch gun which has punished Kimberley so severely,* and if you could also catch Cronje. Reply to me here."

At 6 P.M. Captain Chester Master, Rimington's Guides, accompanied by two of his men, left Klip Drift with a letter† from Kitchener, urging French to move as rapidly as possible to Koodoos Drift, which he might reach in time to intercept Cronje. At 10 P.M. the letter was delivered. An hour later French received by flash signal from Klip Drift the Commander-in-Chief's message. The instructions from Lord Roberts were definite. But out of a division of 5,000 horse, French had only one brigade fit to move, with only three out of seven batteries of artillery. A grave mistake had been made by him. If he had contented himself with relieving Kimberley, and given his horses the rest they so greatly needed after their dash on that place, instead of scouring the country for many miles on the 16th February, without inflicting any injury to speak of on the enemy, "the consequent exhaustion of the horses, which had such a serious effect upon the subsequent operations, might have been avoided." About 3 A.M. on Saturday, the 17th February, French started Broadwood's column ‡ and two batteries of Horse Artillery for Koodoosrand Drift, forty miles from Kimberley. Two squadrons of the Carabineers (6th Dragoon Guards) and the mounted troop

* "Official History," vol. ii., p. 88.

† "The Official History" states "with a written message from the Chief of the Staff." But General French was senior to Lord Kitchener.

‡ It "consisted of the composite regiment of Household Cavalry, 10th Hussars, 12th Lancers, and Colonel W. L. Davidson's brigade division of Horse Artillery (G and P Batteries)."—"Official History of the War in South Africa," vol. ii., p. 99.

Royal Engineers followed an hour later. The general, with his staff, started about 4.30 A.M. "The first fifteen miles were covered very fast, and the brigade overtaken; then a short halt was ordered; but time was everything, and time must not be lost." French and his troopers were soon in the saddle again. Led by their gallant commander, they rode over the veld as fast as their jaded horses could go, "and as we pressed on, large herds of buck, hares, and foxes, and numerous birds were put to flight." About 11 A.M. they caught sight in the distance of the trees lining the banks of the Modder River. The horses were ordered to water, "while the general personally reconnoitred, as is his invariable custom, some rising ground, afterwards called Artillery Hill. And there, at about 4,000 yards' distance, to our joy, we saw the long line of Cronje's convoy streaming away in the distance, with the leading wagons on the very point of dipping down into the drifts which head to the main road to Petrusberg and beyond to Bloemfontein." A galloper was immediately sent back to order up the guns. They were to come at a walk, "that no dust might betray our presence." On arriving, Colonel Davidson quickly brought his batteries into action behind Artillery Hill, "and at 12.15 P.M. on that Saturday the first shell headed Cronje's leading wagon as it stood with its driver just ready to descend into the drift." Great was the panic and confusion in the convoy. The oxen broke and scattered over the plain, the native drivers fled, and a vast number of Boers sought the cover of the river bank. But discipline also prevailed. Major R. Albrecht, of the Orange Free State Artillery, rapidly unlimbered four guns, and opened on the British batteries; but the Boer guns were soon silenced. Many attempts were made to drive back Davidson's batteries, but they were frustrated by the dash of the British cavalry. When noon came Cronje's convoy was still halted at Vendutie Drift, and unable to move

owing to the steady fire of the British guns. At 6 P.M. clouds of dust were seen rising west of Paardeberg, and French knew that the much-needed help was at hand. "From 6 P.M. till 7 P.M. we opened fire again from our batteries, to show Lord Kitchener our exact positions." But the signal was not heard. When black night spread over the land, the two batteries and squadrons of cavalry continued to hold the kopjes, alert to prevent any escape eastward or northward, and the remainder of the column bivouacked on the ground near Kameelfontein homestead. "No supplies had been issued either to the officers, the men, or their animals, for forty-eight hours; the men had only for food a few captured sheep, and the horses such mouthfuls of withered grass as they could snatch from the veld." The ably conducted ride from Kimberley was, as the German Staff state, a most brilliant performance, and the skill and daring displayed were amply rewarded.

CHAPTER X

PAARDEBERG

On the morning of the 16th of February Lord Kitchener informed Lord Roberts that the wire between them, and also to Kimberley, was cut, and requested that he would send him the officer in charge of telegraph and a section of telegraph troop, so that he could keep up connection "as we follow Cronje." He also mentioned a list of articles that had been found at Bosjepan, a standing camp which, from want of oxen, Cronje had abandoned in his flight. There were seventy-eight wagons, two of them loaded with Mauser rifles, besides small arms of different sorts, in each wagon eight boxes full of shells and ten barrels of explosives. The remaining wagons were loaded with tents, sails, coffee, sugar and stores of all kinds. The Chief of the Staff sent to the Commander-in-Chief "a bottle of Cronje's best champagne herewith." He added: "The last news of Cronje is good. They have outspanned and laagered, and our guns are firing into their laager, creating consternation. I hope to-morrow to worry them, and if French comes we will probably break them up." The sanguine expectation was not so easily realised. That evening Kitchener wrote to Roberts at 4 P.M. (the very hour when the 76th Battery had to retire, covered by Hannay's Mounted Infantry):

"16*th February*, 1900, 4 P.M.

"Have returned from Knox's brigade, which has been already held back by Boers, who fight an excellent rearguard

action. He has turned them out of three successive positions. I would propose that Knox's brigade should bivouac about Paardeberg, to which point I had hoped the mounted infantry and artillery would have gone early, only unfortunately they stopped short of it. Hannay, with mounted infantry, to continue pursuit and keep touch with enemy, who are reported to be inclining to the north and not to have crossed the river. The rest of the 6th Division to join Knox's brigade about 1 A.M. to-morrow, and Colvile's division to follow evening of to-morrow, if they get in here at dawn." Kitchener proceeded to make a most important statement: "The enemy are very numerous and fight well and cleverly. I fear we have not done much damage to convoy, but we have hustled them all day. Telegraphic communication with French has been interrupted by convoy crossing the line. Break has now been found, and will be repaired very shortly. I will then try to get French to co-operate with us. If we only had time, I feel sure that we should make short work of convoy, but, with the troops we have, it is a very difficult operation. I am sending Chester Master to Kimberley to-night to ask French if he could meet me at Koodoos Drift."

On receipt of this letter the Commander-in-Chief issued an order for the 9th Division to march at once for Klip Drift. At ten, Colvile, with the 19th Brigade and the 65th and 82nd Batteries, set forth, and arrived near Klip Drift about four. The Highland Brigade belonging to his division, together with the 7th and 8th Mounted Infantry, had marched by the direct road from Wegdraai to Klip Kraal, about four miles up stream. Colvile sent a message to MacDonald, telling him when he intended to resume his march, and that MacDonald was to keep ahead of him.* The Highland Brigade advanced,

* "The Work of the Ninth Division," by Major-General H. E. Colvile, p. 31.

and on reaching Paardeberg Drift bivouacked. They had covered thirty-one miles in less than twenty-four hours. Colvile resumed his march about half-past four, but on coming abreast of Klip Kraal, being blocked by mounted infantry transport, he decided to halt till ten. Then all through the night the soldiers tramped, having been on the move all the previous day and night, and dawn had broken before "an unmistakably Scotch challenge told us that we had overtaken the Highland Brigade." "Having found MacDonald, I learnt that he had marched straight on, and got there between one and two; he believed Kelly-Kenny and Kitchener were somewhere near, but had heard no news."

On the morning of the 17th Kelly-Kenny and Kitchener, with the 6th Division and the mounted infantry, started off again in pursuit of Cronje. The mounted infantry regained touch with the Boers near the Paardeberg kopje, and, checked by the Boer rearguard, the majority of them crossed to the left bank, and before night fell they occupied the rising ground south and south-east of Paardeberg Drift. When the 6th Division first started the 13th Brigade marched along the right bank, and the 18th Brigade on the left, across from Klip Drift, but when they reached the Brandvallee Drift—half-way between Klip Kraal Drift and Paardeberg Drift, and nine miles below Vendutie Drift—the 13th Brigade crossed to the left bank. Here the united division—the infantry being worn out by the fighting and privation of many days' marching—halted for a few hours. About dusk they again pushed on for Paardeberg Drift. Losing the track in the dark, they missed the precise point, and, tramping on, they reached and occupied about midnight the rising ground 3,000 yards south-west of Vendutie Drift. Cronje's position was now truly critical. The principal crossings over the Modder were held or threatened by British troops. Cronje had neglected some

important factors in his calculations—the spirit of the British soldier, his eagerness to fight, and his marvellous powers of endurance. The march of the infantry to Paardeberg ranks high in the annals of warfare.

On the morning of the 17th Lord Roberts was confined to his quarters at Jacobsdal by an ailment which incapacitated him for any physical exertion. The letter which he had received from the Chief of the Staff on the night of the 16th clearly indicated that the chase after Cronje would be a long and difficult operation—in fact, a running fight to Bloemfontein. He therefore sent the following letter to the General Officer commanding the 6th Division:

"JACOBSDAL.

"*17th February*, 1900.

"MY DEAR KELLY-KENNY,—I hope you are pushing on with all possible speed to overtake Cronje's laager. It is of the utmost importance it should not get away. The bullocks drawing his wagons cannot go as fast as our mules, nor for so many consecutive days without breaking down. I hope to join you to-morrow; meanwhile, please consider that Lord Kitchener is with you for the purpose of communicating to you my orders, so that there may be no delay—such as references to and fro would entail. If we can deal Cronje a heavy blow, it is likely that there will be no more fighting in the Orange Free State.—Yours very truly,

"ROBERTS."*

The same afternoon Lord Roberts wrote to Kitchener:

"Have written to him (Kelly-Kenny) to say that I expect him to push on with all speed, and that you are with him to enable him to carry out my orders, so that there may be

* "Official History," vol. ii., p. 104.

no delay which references to and from him would assuredly entail.

"I will join you to-morrow, I hope, and I think we should push on to Bloemfontein with all possible speed, before the enemy have time to recover from the shock they have received. Have told Richardson to send on groceries for a month for our force, and as many days' biscuits as can be transported. Meat we can get on the road."

This letter did not give, nor was it intended to give, any fresh authority to the Chief of the Staff. What Lord Roberts desired, and had every right to expect, was that, without reference to himself, the two generals would render each other loyal support in carrying out his wishes. His letter to Kitchener clearly indicates that he did not in the least expect Cronje would be overtaken before he reached Bloemfontein. But, by being pursued with the utmost possible speed, he would reach the capital of the Orange Free State before he had time to recover from the shock he had received, and so make the British entry more easy. Lord Roberts, when he wrote to Kelly-Kenny and Kitchener on the 17th, did not know that French, by his magnificent ride, had headed Cronje. He could not imagine that the stubborn Dutch farmer would laager on the right bank of the river and allow his passage across it to be blocked. He did not know that an attack on Cronje was imminent. If he had had a knowledge of any of these facts his instructions to Kelly-Kenny and Kitchener would have been far more definite. All the information the Field-Marshal possessed he sent in a cipher telegram to the Chief of the Staff:

"JACOBSDAL.

"*17th February*, 1900.

"No. C 128. Cipher. A man who was with Cronje yesterday states that reinforcements of one thousand men are

expected to join him to-morrow or next day from Colesberg, and the same number from Ladysmith. That Cronje's object is to go northward to invest Kimberley again from the north, when joined by Bredenbach, who is some distance westwards. That the five thousand Orange Free State men with Cronje will go to Bloemfontein. That food with Cronje's convoy is scarce, and that many of his men are done up. He states that there is a depôt of supplies near Kalkfontein, left behind by Cronje for want of cattle to draw the wagons. He states also that Cronje was very nearly surrounded by our troops yesterday, and that he has to go through the night to Paardeberg Drift." *

Lord Kitchener had, with two aides-de-camp, pushed on beyond the 6th Division, and bivouacked on the night of the 17th with the mounted infantry two miles south of Paardeberg Drift. It was a supreme moment. He was away from Kelly-Kenny, and Colvile had not to his knowledge arrived. During the day, owing to the dispersion of the troops, he had no opportunity of consulting with the two generals future plans of operations and how executive orders were to be issued. On the 16th he and Kelly-Kenny had both issued orders. Lord Roberts had warned him that the Boers expected reinforcements the next day. Kitchener thought that Cronje's laager must be attacked at once and Cronje's whole force captured. He measured the risk and responsibility, and was prepared to incur it. The plan of attacking the Boer position was soon clear to him, and about 3 A.M., before the long hours of darkness had slipped away, he sent for Hannay, over whom he had no direct command, and gave him orders.

The position which the laager occupied, though encircled and commanded by higher ground, was not unfavourable for defence. Close to its front the Modder River wound its way

* "Official History," vol. ii., p. 110.

from north-east to south-west. The Modder is a more difficult obstacle than an English stream which meanders through open green meadows. It flows through a channel thirty or forty feet in depth, and about fifty yards in width, which is overshadowed by thickets of mimosa thorn and other bushes which cover the steep banks, and, climbing above them, spread in places for some hundred yards into the bare plain. Into the Modder run numerous dongas—channels or gullies—formed by the action of water, with steep sides which afford ample shelter for riflemen. Beyond its green fringe on the south, the green plain, nowhere more than 3,000 yards in width, rises gently. A rocky hill, some three hundred feet high, known afterwards as "Kitchener's Kopje," rises abruptly, and commands the river and plain on either side of it. The Boers, during the night of the 17th, to strengthen the natural advantages of their position, had sunk pits into the river bank just wide enough at the top to squeeze through, and undercut enough to give shelter even from vertical fire.* They made "trenches running all along the top of the right bank, the higher of the two, for about a mile and a half above Vendutie Drift, and on the left bank for about half that distance." † They sent four hundred men, by means of two *ponts,* near Vendutie Drift across the river. Before the curtain of darkness had lifted, the dongas and patches of bush were lined with riflemen. They threw up a mound of earth to protect the wagons on the veld. It hardly afforded sufficient protection. The laager, technically so called, could be easily taken by assault, but before it was stormed the river and a strong natural outwork had to be secured and crossed. There were, it is true, four drifts, or fords, but recent rains had caused the rapid African river to rise, and crossing it, even

* "The Work of the Ninth Division," by Major-General Sir H. E. Colvile, p. 43.

† "Official History of the War," vol. ii., p. 109.

at the fords, was full of dfficulty and peril. Lord Kitchener's plan was to engage the Boers from the south, whilst he attacked the laager from both west and east, that is, up-stream and down-stream. He therefore ordered Hannay to leave two of the mounted corps at Paardeberg Drift to reconnoitre the ground there, while he was to march eastward at once, and cross to the right bank of the river between Vendutie and Koodoos Drift. When he had crossed he was to wait until an attack from the west developed. He was then to assault the laager from the east, and would be supported by an infantry brigade.* About 4 A.M., when it was still dark, Hannay set forth to carry out his orders. An hour later, as the sun began to rise, Kitchener rode back to Signal Hill, a little to the east of Paardeberg Drift, and not far from the ground where the 6th Division had bivouacked. From the summit he had a full view of the scene of action, but the ravines filled with riflemen were not visible, and no moving leaves betrayed the Boers crouching in the thicket. Kelly-Kenny joined him there. He had already ordered his brigades, the 13th † and 18th,‡ to advance from their bivouac, and cross to the right bank by Paardeberg Drift. But Kitchener had another programme; his humour was hot, and these orders were cancelled. The 76th and 81st Batteries, with a naval 12-pounder gun, were sent to a long spur north-east of Signal Hill. They began playing on the laager, and long flames rising to the sky followed by loud reports showed that the fire was effectual. The Yorkshire Regiment, the leading battalion of the 18th Brigade, having been recalled, deployed on the left front of the guns. Major-General Knox extended

* "Official History of the War," vol. ii., p. 116.

† The 1st Oxfordshire Light Infantry and the 1st West Riding Regiment belonged to the 13th Brigade, commanded by Major-General C. E. Knox.

‡ The Yorkshire Regiment belonged to the 18th Brigade, commanded by Brigadier-General T. E. Stephenson.

the Oxfordshire Light Infantry and the West Ridings into line on the left of them. Four hundred yards behind them were two battalions of the Buffs as a reserve.

The ground on which the 9th Division had bivouacked was a little to the west of Paardeberg Drift. About 5 A.M., at the time when Hannay was marching westward, Major-General Colvile was informed by Colonel J. S. Ewart, Brigade-Major, that the enemy was advancing from the east. "From our bivouac, which was near the Modder, nothing was to be seen but the kopje known as Paardeberg, on the north bank of the river, and a stony ridge running round the sky-line on our side." * The division at once stood to their arms, while Colvile galloped to a spur on the ridge running towards the river to study the ground. "I could see the Modder winding from the eastwards for about a mile, and then making a sharp bend to the south. On the rising ground to our south-east were British troops, which I assumed to be of Kelly-Kenny's division. In the scrub by the river-banks under us to the north-east were a few of Martyr's mounted infantry exchanging shots with the Boers; and about two and a half miles to the eastward, on the farther bank of the river, was the Boer laager." Colvile, having surveyed the position, determined to "leave half a battalion and some guns to hold the gap between Kelly-Kenny's left and the river, and take

* "The Work of the Ninth Division," by Major-General Sir H. E. Colvile, p. 33.

"The Official History" (vol. ii., p. 119) states: "As neither the divisional commander nor his staff had any knowledge of the local situation, Colonel J. S. Ewart, A.A.G., was directed to reconnoitre. After an abortive attempt to cross Paardeberg Drift, he worked up the left bank of the Modder, discovered the site of Cronje's laager, and ascertained that parties of Boers were making their way from it down the river bed. Soon after Ewart had brought back this information to his General, Lieut.-Colonel Martyr, about 5 A.M., reported that the 2nd Mounted Infantry, one of the corps left by Hannay at the drift, was under fire from the enemy in the bush near the ford. He added that the river was high, hardly passable by infantry, and that several of his horses had been drowned in crossing the drift."

the rest of the division across to close round Cronje from the north-west." * But before the order was given he heard that the river was impassable for infantry. Owing to the lack of transport, the pontoons had been left at Klip Drift. There was only one section of a James collapsible boat. In this the Royal Engineers carried a rope across the Modder, and then ran some wagons into the ford to break the force of the current.

When the Boers saw what was taking place, they made a vigorous attempt to drive the mounted infantry from their post in the river-bed near Paardeberg Drift. Colvile ordered MacDonald to bring up the Highland Brigade, and clear the scrub and thicket on the left bank of the river above the ford before he placed his force across it.

"Just as he was beginning this movement," Colvile writes, "Hamilton, Kitchener's D.A.A.G., brought a verbal message that I was to reinforce Kelly-Kenny with my whole division, including the Howitzer and Field Batteries. I sent him the batteries, as ordered, and told him he should have MacDonald as soon as the scrub was cleared, and Smith-Dorrien as soon as he could be ready.† Soon after the batteries had advanced (about 7.30 A.M.) Colvile seeing the Boers moving in force in the river-bed near the great bend, recalled the 82nd Field Battery, and it took post on the left of the Howitzer and 76th Field Batteries.‡

About the same time as these movements were in progress Lord Kitchener got into heliographic communication with

* Colvile, pp. 33-34.

† "The Work of the Ninth Division," p. 35.

‡ "Official History," vol. ii., p. 121. General Colville writes: "So, failing any infantry till the drift was passable, I thought the best thing to do was to make their advance as unpleasant as possible with artillery, and sent a message to the 82nd Battery to come back at once. It made very good practice; but the Boers had got cover before we could open fire, and we were unable to turn them out that day."—"Work of the Ninth Division," p. 35.

French, whose guns had also opened fire on the laager. French told him, "Enemy appears to be in force along edge of laager facing north. My horses and men are nearly worn out." This heliogram crossed a message from Kelly-Kenny, asking * French to prevent the Boers escaping northward. A squadron of the 12th Lancers was accordingly sent to reconnoitre towards Koodoos Drift and clear the north of the Koodoos-rand of the enemy. Hannay meanwhile had occupied Kitchener's Kopje with the 4th Mounted Infantry, and having received orders soon after 6.30 to occupy any fords between Vendutie and Koodoos Drift, he proceeded to Vanderberg's Drift, two and a half miles east of the laager. Halting there, he sent a company of the 6th Mounted Infantry across the river, where they obtained touch with a squadron of the 12th Lancers belonging to French's force. Two other companies of the 6th Mounted Infantry seized the crossing at Banks's Drift, two miles north of Vanderberg's Drift.† Lord Kitchener had told Hannay that he would be supported by an infantry brigade, and verbal orders were sent to Brigadier-General J. E. Stephenson to take two of his battalions, the Welsh and Essex, up the left bank of the river under cover of the artillery. General Stephenson, however, never understood that it was his particular duty to support Hannay, whose name was, he says, never mentioned to him.‡ In moving up the river from west to east Stephenson came upon Kitchener's Horse, who were exchanging shots

* Kelly-Kenny could not give orders to French because the latter was senior to him.

† "De Lisle, after some sharp fighting, successfully seized both Vanderberg's and Banks's Drifts." (7.30 A.M. to 8.30 A.M.).—"*Times* History," vol. iii., p. 427. "Official History of the War," vol. ii., pp. 117-118.

‡ "Stephenson, with the Welsh and Essex, was at the same time ordered to support the Mounted Infantry along the left bank, while the 81st Battery was also sent upstream to bring an enfilading fire to bear on the laager (7.30 A.M. to 8 A.M.).—"*Times* History," vol. iii., p. 427.

with a party of Boers near Vendutie Drift, and reinforced them with two companies of the Welsh. Hearing firing near Kitchener's Kopje he deployed, facing towards Stinkfontein.

The various movements which carried the British brigades and divisions into position were completed about eight o'clock. As it is a peculiarity of the conflict at Paardeberg that it was divided into several separate actions, it is necessary, in order to follow these attacks, to have a clear idea of the tactical position of the British troops at that time. At Paardeberg Drift there was on the right bank a company of the 7th Mounted Infantry. On the left bank there were in position the remainder of the 7th Mounted Infantry, as well as the 2nd, and a quarter of a mile in rear the 19th Brigade, under Brigadier-General Smith-Dorrien. In line with the 19th the Highland Brigade in full, and in rear on the lower slopes of Signal Hill the 82nd Field Battery. On the right of the Highland Brigade were the Oxford Light Infantry, the Yorkshires with two companies of the Gloucesters on the extreme right, supported by the 65th (Howitzer), 76th and 87th R.F.A., and a naval 12-pounder on the high ground in rear. This portion of the position gave a frontage of three miles. In the long loop made by the river, facing the laager, and only some half mile from Vendutie Drift, were established two companies of the Welsh, and a small body of Kitchener's Horse. The line of battle was flanked by Kitchener's Kopje, which was held by Kitchener's Horse and the 4th Mounted Infantry, supported by the Essex Regiment and six companies of the Welsh Regiment in position on the lower slopes to the north, facing east and flanking parties of Boers on the low kopjes above Stinkfontein. About two and a half miles from Kitchener's Kopje was Vanderberg's Drift, occupied by Hannay, the higher up the river Banks's Drift, occupied by two companies of the 6th Mounted

Infantry. This was the line of battle on the south bank. On the north there was French's Cavalry Division.

At 8 A.M. the Chief of the Staff sent the following message to the Commander-in-Chief:

"From LORD KITCHENER,
"Cable Cart, Front.
"To LORD ROBERTS.
"*18th February*, 1900. 8 *a.m.*

"We have stopped the enemy's convoy on the river here. General Kelly-Kenny's division is holding them to the south, enemy lining bank of Modder, convoy stationary in our immediate front. General Colvile's division has arrived, and they are putting one brigade and one battery on the north side of the river, and one brigade and one howitzer battery on the south side, and will march eastward, up stream. The mounted infantry have gone round, and hold the river on our right flank. I have been in heliographic communication with General French, who is opposite to us, in rear of the enemy's position; he is now moving down on opposite bank on our right flank. The enemy is thus completely surrounded, and I think it must be a case of complete surrender. Will keep you informed as events occur."

Lord Kitchener did not realise that he had to do with a stubborn enemy in their natural fortification. Lord Roberts replied:

"To MAJOR-GENERAL LORD KITCHENER,
"*viâ* Klip Drift.
"JACOBSDAL,
"*18th February*, 1900.

"Your news is most satisfactory; I am sending off at once Chermside's brigade and the brigade of Guards, and will be

at Klip Drift myself early to-morrow. These troops can push on should reinforcements reach Cronje before you have defeated him. Ask Kenny and Colvile to tell their troops that I count on them to make this business a brilliant success."

At the time when Kitchener was sending his telegram to Lord Roberts, the Yorkshires began the frontal attack by advancing towards the river. The Boers, concealed in trenches and bushes, opened a heavy fire, and the hail of shot struck down officers and men. A momentary halt. Again they rushed forward, and again they were overpowered by the fire of their concealed foe. Thus by rushes they arrived within two hundred yards of the river. Five officers and about sixty men gallantly dashed forward and reached the stream. Many were killed, and the rest had to take shelter in the dongas. They were worn out with fatigue, owing to their previous long marches, and parched with thirst. Sergeant Atkinson went down to the river to bring water to his wounded, and was mortally wounded when returning. On him was bestowed after death the bronze cross of valour.

During this time on the left of the Yorkshires, the West Ridings, and beyond these the Oxfordshire Light Infantry also, went on with spirit down the gentle declivity which led to the river. They were not stopped by the fire of musketry which broke out from the rifle pits, but pressed on, returning the fire. A greater portion of the West Ridings, with a detachment of the Oxfordshire, reached the bank, and by a gallant charge drove the Boers out of the trenches. The riflemen on the other bank now opened on them a rapid and accurate fire, and, while leading on his men, Major-General Knox was wounded. Soon after, orders were received from Lieutenant-General Kelly-Kenny, forbidding them to cross the river. "Towards evening many of the men, desperate from want of

water, left cover and dashed down to the river, to drink and to fill their water-bottles. At first, not a few were shot down; but when the Boers realised that they were not coming on with any aggressive purpose, but only to satisfy their thirst, they were chivalrous enough to allow them to do so unharmed." *

When, about 8 A.M., the three columns of the Highland Brigade were marching eastward up the river, they were stopped by the fire of musketry which came from the banks. MacDonald turned to the left and faced the enemy. Then the long line of Highlanders went through the storm of bullets across open and coverless ground. Many fell. They got within four hundred yards when, smitten by the fire from the trenches, they could go no farther. MacDonald now sent back Major Urmston, his brigade major, to bring two companies and a half of the Black Watch and two companies of the Seaforths, who were in the scrub up the river bank and the river bed. When they arrived several hundred yards below the big donga, the chief position of the Boers, two companies of the Black Watch and one of the Seaforths waded across the river under a heavy fire. On the other bank they were joined by parties of the 7th Mounted Infantry, who had been maintaining a gallant fight in the scrub, and later on were reinforced by a mixed body of Black Watch and Seaforths, who forded the river lower down. On the left bank parties of mounted infantry joined the company of the Seaforths. Through broken ground covered with bush the troops on both sides of the bank pushed eastward against the big donga. "They had gained some ground, and were within a few hundred yards of it when the attack gradually withered up. Most of the officers with Urmston had been killed or wounded; the casualties among the men had been heavy, and those still uninjured

* "Official History of the War," vol. ii., p. 125.

were tired out." * The advance of the Highlanders across that coverless plain was a splendid feat of which they may well be proud. They could do no more against a well-entrenched enemy, and they remained where they were until nightfall. During the day the Black Watch lost about twenty and the Seaforths about twenty-six per cent. of their strength.† At 10 A.M. Major-General MacDonald, who had been with the Highlanders throughout the advance, returned to a ridge occupied by the Howitzer Battery, from whence he could get a good view of the ground occupied by his brigade, and while there was wounded in the foot.‡

At 8.30 A.M. Colvile received an order from Lord Kitchener to send Smith-Dorrien's brigade (19th) and the 82nd Field Battery across Paardeberg Drift. Shortly after 9 A.M. three battalions of the brigade—the 1st Gordon Highlanders, the 2nd Shropshire Light Infantry, and the Royal Canadian Regiment§—crossed the river, and, unnoticed by the Boers, commenced a wide turning movement of the enemy's position. "Smith-Dorrien sent the Canadians to work up the river bank, their right forming the pivot of the movement, and their left joining the right of the Shropshires, whose left in turn touched the right of the Gordons." The latter were accompanied by the 82nd Battery, and their objective was Gun Hill, a knoll com-

* "Official History," vol. ii., p. 126. "*The Times* History" states: "The leading three companies, advancing in admirable style, had got within 300 yards of the donga when, most unfortunately, they received the order to stop, as they were masking the fire of the men on the south bank. Had these companies been properly supported instead of checked, and the fire from the other bank been diverted, or even neglected, their gallant enterprise might have secured a tangible success." Vol. iii., p. 433.

† "Official History," vol. ii., p. 126.

‡ "The Work of the Ninth Division," by Major-General Sir H. E. Colvile, p. 39.

§ The fourth battalion of the brigade, the 2nd Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, had been left behind at the bivouac ground south of Paardeberg Drift to guard the baggage.

manding the donga at the bend of the river. About 11 A.M. the Shropshires, moving slowly northward, reached Gun Hill, drove a small body of Boers from its crest, and deployed in front of it. The Gordons swinging round the rear of the hill deployed beyond them. Their extreme left was thirteen hundred yards from the laager, and both battalions flanked the big donga—the best possible position for aiding the troops who were attacking it. About 12.30 P.M. the 82nd Field Battery came into action, and directed an effective flanking fire on the Boers at the river bend. The commander, however, seeing his shrapnel burst several times over the heads of the Highland Brigade, who were in action on the south bank and the river bed, ceased firing, and turned his guns on the laager. He did not know that the western attack was being made against the donga. As soon as the brigade crossed the river, two companies of the Shropshires and the whole of the Royal Canadians were ordered to wheel to the right, and support the three companies of the Highlanders in their attack on the big donga. The Shropshires dashed into the bush lining the river bank, while the Canadians, under Lieut.-Colonel W. D. Otter, moved across the open veld against the donga. When their left firing line came to within eight hundred yards of the donga, the Boers concealed in the trenches opened a galling fire, and they were obliged to halt. For two hours they were exposed to the fire and remained firm.

Lord Kitchener, who had watched these operations throughout the afternoon from his post on the south bank a little to the east of Signal Hill, determined that Smith-Dorrien's turning movement had sufficiently developed to carry the donga straightway by a resolute bayonet charge, and so prepare the way for an assault on the laager itself. Indisputably the attack was difficult. But, according to the German official account, "his determination to carry the attack through was

certainly right."* At about one o'clock the Chief of the Staff rode to Signal Hill, where Colvile was, and asked him if he had got any fresh troops for a more determined assault. "I told him," says Colvile, "my only reserve was half the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, guarding the transport, and he said this half battalion must cross over and rush the position. He asked Ewart to lead them across, and told him what he wished done." Ewart sent for the commanding officer of the battalion, Lieut.-Colonel W. Aldworth, and told him "the Chief of the Staff's wishes, and on hearing from him that his men were about to have their dinners, put off the advance till they had done; for it did not strike me as a task to be undertaken on an empty stomach."

The three companies of the Cornwall Light Infantry, under Aldworth, started about 3.30 P.M., and crossed the river half an hour later. On reaching the front line of the Canadians, Aldworth informed their commander that he had "been sent to finish this business, and meant to do it with the bayonet." About 5 P.M. the three companies of the Cornwall and the Canadians fixed bayonets, and Aldworth, placing himself in front of his men, gave the order to charge. At once, as if by common impulse, Cornishmen and Canadians, with a wild yell, rushed forward. Gusts of bullets, pom-pom shells and shrapnel rent the advancing line. But on they swept with reckless courage. Three hundred yards more, and the goal was reached. Many fell dead and dying on the open field this moment. Aldworth, in advance of his men, was brought to the ground by a bullet. Raising himself, his voice pealed high above the din: "Come on, Dukes! Come on, Cornwalls!" These were his last words. He dropped back dead. But neither the Cornwalls nor the Canadians could go any

* "The German Official Account of the War in South Africa," translated by Colonel W. H. H. Waters, vol. i., p. 191.

farther in the face of the murderous fire, and they threw themselves on the ground.

The three operations on the west, the advance of the 19th Brigade on the north bank, and the attack of the 6th Division and the Highland Brigade on the south bank, had failed. When the 6th Division was forming for their advance, Hannay, according to Kitchener's orders, recalled the 6th Mounted Infantry from Banks's Drift and advanced on to the banks of the river, against the enemy. When Hannay had moved some miles down the right bank he left the horses, and with his men pushed forward within seven hundred yards of the Boers' main position in front of the laager. But no opening in the Boers' entrenchment could be seen. At 1.30 he sent a written message to the Chief of the Staff saying he could advance no farther. The message reached Kitchener soon after he had told Colvile that the Boer position on the western right bank must be stormed. The sum and substance of his plan was that the laager should be taken by a simultaneous attack on the western and eastern sides. He had ordered the western attack to be driven home, and he sent the following reply to Hannay:

"The time has now come for a final effort. All troops have been warned that the laager must be rushed at all costs. Try and carry Stephenson's brigade on with you. But if they cannot go, the mounted infantry should do it. Gallop up, if necessary, and fire into the laager."

Whilst directing that Hannay should try and carry Stephenson's brigade with him, this order was peremptory and unconditional that the mounted infantry should storm the Boer entrenchments. It was impossible to carry Stephenson's brigade with him, for it was two miles away on the other side of the river. Hannay so read the order as to conceive it his duty to gallop up and fire into the laager. He knew it

was a forlorn hope. But it was for him to do and to die. At once he sent a galloper to tell the 4th Mounted Infantry to cross the river, and another with instructions to Colonel De Lisle to storm the laager.* Then he ordered about fifty men who were in rear of the skirmishers' line to mount and form line. "We are going to charge the laager; follow me," he said, and rode on. Led by Hankey, of the Warwicks, they rode after him. As he passed through the firing line Hannay shouted to an officer to support him, and swept forward with increasing speed. When the Boers saw the horsemen coming straight for their trenches, they opened fire and emptied many a saddle. In well-maintained order, but growing less every instant, the devoted band rode on. Half the course was finished when Hannay's horse was shot dead. Clearing himself from his charger's body he pressed forward on foot, and within two hundred yards from the goal he fell, riddled by bullets. The same moment Hankey also received his mortal hurt. Two officers † and a few men, still untouched, rode into the laager, and were made prisoners. The charge was a splendid feat of arms, but, however gallantly made, it could gain no material advantage.

Soon after Stephenson had deployed, facing towards Stinkfontein, he received orders from the Chief of the Staff to collect his two battalions and to "push in on the laager." He turned his men about, and marched towards the river. When Hannay began to cross Vanderberg's Drift, in order to work down the stream, the 81st Battery, posted one thousand yards south-west of Vanderberg's Drift, opened fire on the

* "*The Times* History" states that he sent "away his staff on various pretexts, one to bring the Fourth Mounted Infantry across the river, another to convey a copy of Kitchener's order to De Lisle." Vol. iii., p. 439. "The Official History" states the message did not reach De Lisle till next morning. Vol. ii., p. 132.

† Captains O. G. Godfrey-Faussett, 1st Essex, and W. E. Cramer-Roberts, 1st Norfolk.

laager to support him. But it had no sooner come into action when fire was opened on it from the heights to the north of Stinkfontein. The first of the reinforcements which Cronje expected had arrived. It consisted of a few hundred burghers, with two guns, who had, under Commandant Steyn, come by forced marches from Bloemfontein. The commander of the battery, reversing his guns, soon silenced the hostile fire. But the arrival of Steyn's small force had a considerable effect on the fortunes of the day. It entangled Stephenson's brigade, and prevented it from attacking the laager from the east at the same time as it was being attacked from the west. About 10 A.M. Stephenson received an order from Kelly-Kenny that he was to disregard the Boers to the east, and advance on the laager. It was, however, not possible to disregard the Boers to the east. The 81st Battery, the 4th Mounted Infantry, and the squadron of Kitchener's Horse had to be kept occupied in preventing the further advance of Steyn's detachment. Two companies of the Welsh had to act as escort to the battery. Two companies were with the detachments of Kitchener's Horse near Vendutie. The rest of the battalion returned to the river, and took up a position under cover in a deep donga about a mile to the west of Vanderberg's Drift. Meanwhile the Essex Regiment concentrated at the drift.

On the receipt of Hannay's message, the 4th Mounted Infantry proceeded to the river, and the 81st Battery, its escort, and part of Kitchener's Horse were the only troops left near Kitchener's Kopje to contain the Boers. At 3.30 P.M. the mounted infantry passed over the drift. At the same time that the three companies of the Cornwall Light Infantry, under Aldworth, were crossing the river near Paardeberg Drift, on the extreme west, three of the companies of the Welsh and four companies of the Essex, under Stephenson, crossed the river at Vanderberg's Drift, on the extreme east. After getting

clear of the north bank and the dongas, the Welsh were extended in three lines in rear of the mounted infantry, and the word being given, the first line advanced, with ten paces interval between each man, across open ground towards the eastern flank of the Boer trenches, about a mile and a half lower down the stream. The Essex followed in support under cover of the river-bed. When they approached within about a thousand yards of the Boer position, they came under a heavy fire. Stephenson ordered his men and the mounted infantry in front of them to attack it. The Welshmen fixed bayonets, and, with loud cheers, pushed forward courageously across the plain by short rushes of alternate half companies. Pressing on, they had got within five hundred yards of the laager when their commander, Colonel Banfield, was mortally wounded, and the advance collapsed under the fire of the Boers. The Essex had worked up the river-bed a hundred yards nearer the laager than the Welsh. Their commander, Major F. J. Brown, thinking that a further attack across the open sleet of bullets must end in disaster, ordered both battalions to retire. Stephenson had left the firing line to give some orders to a detachment of engineers who had crossed the drift. As he was returning he met the retiring infantry. He halted them, and shelter trenches being dug, they spent the night in them. Another attempt to drive resolute riflemen out of their trenches by storm had failed.

While Kitchener was intent on attacking the trenches on the right bank, the whole plan of battle was overturned. The error was committed of leaving Kitchener's Kopje and the farm buildings of Osfontein to be held by a small party of Kitchener's Horse.* De Wet, a born leader of men, on

* "Lieutenant-General Kelly-Kenny had proposed to detail four companies of the Essex to hold Kitchener's Kopje, but at the Chief of the Staff's suggestion he had only sent two companies. Without Kelly-Kenny's knowledge,

hearing that Cronje was being hard pressed by the British troops, hastened to his assistance with six hundred burghers and a couple of guns. Marching throughout the night, he arrived six miles south-east of Paardeberg on the afternoon of the 18th. He then heard that Kitchener's Kopje was weakly held. He realised its strategic importance, and he determined to take it by a rush. He sent half his men, under Botha, to surprise the farm, and he went off with the remainder at a swift gallop to the kopje. The men at the farm had not the least suspicion of danger. They were watering their horses when Botha burst upon them, stampeded their horses, and took most of them prisoners. As sudden was the stormful appearance of De Wet at the kopje. After a brief resistance it was taken, and the Boer guns were dragged up to the summit. So swift was the movement that the first warning received by the British troops was a sudden storm of shrapnel and musketry smiting the baggage of the 6th Division and the 76th and 81st Field Batteries. The 81st Battery was limbering up, having been ordered to go nearer the laager, when the storm burst on it and killed most of its horses. Attacked simultaneously in front, flank and rear, the battery had to turn its fire in three directions. It had to keep down the fire of a pom-pom from the northern slopes of Kitchener's Kopje; it had to engage the guns on the kopje north-east of Osfontein Farm; it had to prevent being rushed by a party of Boers in front. An appeal for help was sent to the detachment of Essex guarding the drift. Lieutenant F. N. Parsons promptly brought a few men to their aid, who defended the exposed flank, and, supported by the two companies of the Welsh, he covered the retirement of the battery.

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these had been called away by one of Kitchener's staff-officers to meet an emergency on some other part of the field."—"Official History," vol. ii., p. 136.

For his gallantry Lieutenant Parsons was awarded the Victoria Cross.

The capture of Kitchener's Kopje about the same time as the failure of the western and eastern attacks was the crisis of the fight. There were no troops for a great counter-stroke. When the warm African day was drawing to a close, a few companies of the Gloucestershire and two of the Buffs were sent to retake the kopje. But it was dusk before they reached the foot of the hill, and there they entrenched themselves and spent the night. The remainder of the troops slept where they had fought, while the bearer parties scoured the field collecting the dead and wounded. Brave men fell on both sides. The British loss amounted to 24 officers and 279 men killed, 59 officers and 847 men wounded, and 2 officers and 59 men missing.

At 7.40 P.M. Lord Roberts received the following telegram from the Chief of the Staff:

"*From Lord Kitchener,*
"*Cable Cart, E. of Paardeberg.*
"*To Lord Roberts.*
(*Received at* 7.40 P.M.)

"18*th February,* 1900.

"We did not succeed in getting into the enemy's convoy, though we drove the Boers back a considerable distance along the river-bed. The troops are maintaining their position, and I hope to-morrow we shall be able to do something more definite. Late this afternoon the Boers developed an attack on our right, which is still going on, but is kept under control by our artillery. Our casualties have, I fear, been severe. Owing to the bush fighting near the river, I have not been able to get lists yet, but will send them as soon as possible."

The Commander-in-Chief replied:

"JACOBSDAL,

"*18th February*, 1900.

"We must not let Cronje escape now, or be able to hold out until reinforcements can reach him. I have warned Chermside's and the Guards Brigade that they may have to push on to your assistance on reaching Klip Drift, where they ought to be by daylight to-morrow. We shall have three field batteries and eight naval guns, and about four hundred mounted infantry. Have information waiting for me at Klip Drift.

"ROBERTS."

CHAPTER XI

CAPTURE OF CRONJE

Lord Roberts, owing to the telegrams he had received from Lord Kitchener during the afternoon of the 18th, knew that Cronje was making a desperate resistance. He also felt that it was possible that reinforcements might reach him from Ladysmith and Colesberg. He therefore ordered Lieutenant-General Tucker to march with all speed to Paardeberg with Chermside's brigade, Hall's brigade division Royal Field Artillery (18th, 62nd and 75th Batteries), Bearcroft's four 4.7-in. and two 12-pounders Naval Brigade, the mounted infantry of the City Imperial Volunteers, and the 9th Company Royal Engineers.* Tucker started about nine o'clock on the night of the 18th from Jacobsdal, and reached Paardeberg between three and six o'clock on the following day. The 2nd Norfolk and 2nd Lincoln, 1st King's Own Scottish Borderers, and 2nd Hampshires, constituting the brigade, "had marched on half rations rather more than thirty miles in less than twenty hours, a fine performance considering the great heat, the lack of water, and the thick clouds of dust which choked and parched the throats of the men." † Lord Roberts instructed Major-General Wavell to hold Jacobsdal with the 15th Brigade, and he ordered the brigade of Guards to march from Modder River Station to Klip Drift to watch the Klip and Klip Kraal Drifts.

* "Official History of the War," vol. ii., p. 147. † *Ibid.*

Capture of Cronje

At 4 A.M. on the 19th the Commander-in-Chief left Jacobsdal with his staff, and six hours later he reached Paardeberg. On his arrival he was informed that Cronje had sent early in the morning a letter asking for an armistice of twenty-four hours in order to bury his dead and for leave to send away his wounded.* French, the senior general, replied as follows:

"I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your communication of to-day, and have sent your letter to the G.O.C. of the British forces. As soon as I receive his reply, I shall inform you thereof. In the meantime I shall not attack your laager. Seeing that your troops are completely surrounded, I would advise you to surrender your force, and then peace will again reign in the land."

Cronje knew, as Lord Roberts knew, that reinforcements were hastening to his assistance. The Commander-in-Chief refused the request, for, as he stated, "it was obviously only an expedient to gain time, and he can bury his dead at night as we did." Lord Roberts demanded an unconditional surrender. To this demand Cronje, at 1 P.M., sent the following curt reply: "Since you are so unmerciful as not to accord the time asked for, nothing remains for me to do; you do as you wish." This was read as "Nothing remains for me but to do as you wish"—i.e. to surrender.† Lord Roberts replied, at 2 P.M.: "Accept surrender; please return with Captain Liebmann."

"Captain Liebmann, the bearer of this note, was fired at on his way to the laager, although he was provided with a flag of truce visible from afar, and the horse of the man

* "Official History of the War," vol. ii., p. 148. "*The Times* History" and the German "Official History" translate it: "collect his wounded."

† "*The Times* History of the War," vol. iii., p. 454. The "Official History" translates the message as follows: "If you are so unreasonable as to refuse me time to bury my dead, you must do as you please." The German translation agrees with that of *The Times*.

who accompanied him was shot. The 3rd Brigade, which had received orders to disarm the Boers, was also fired at on the march to the laager; as the men lay down at once they suffered no loss."

Captain Liebmann returned with the following answer:

"Since you are so unmerciful as not to accord me the time asked for, nothing remains for me to do. You do as you wish. During my lifetime I will never surrender. If you wish to bombard, fire away. *Dixi.*" *

While these letters were passing to and fro, Lord Roberts had studied the situation. A careful personal reconnaissance had enabled him to ascertain the peculiarities of the ground, owing to which Cronje's strange position in the bed of the Modder River had proved to be a strong one, and not at all easy to be searched even by howitzers. He saw that the steep banks of the river, fringed with bushes and trees and much broken by ravines, provided excellent natural cover, which the Boers had rapidly improved. "A few determined men," he wrote, "can bar an advance along the banks of the stream, and on each side of the river the ground is an absolutely bare plain, which can be swept with rifle-fire from the Boers." The heavy casualty list of the previous day had shown that it could not be assaulted without very severe loss. Lord Roberts had also found, as he states in his dispatch, the troops in camp much exhausted by their previous marching and fighting, and he decided not to make a second attack on the laager, the capture of which "by a *coup de main* would have entailed a further loss of life, which does not appear to me to be warranted by the military exigencies of the situation." He therefore determined to adopt the more bloodless course of crushing the enemy's resistance by his artillery, and drawing closer his troops. As

* "The German Official Account of the War," p. 263. Appendix vii.

soon as they had approached near enough to warrant a general attack being made, Cronje surrendered. What more could have been effected by a second attack and a great loss of life?

About 3 P.M. hostilities were resumed. The guns south of the Modder, Dean's 12-pounder, Hall's brigade division, the 76th and 82nd Field Batteries, and the 65th Howitzer Battery at once began to bombard the laager. The 81st Battery crossed to the right bank at Paardeberg Drift, and from Gun Hill maintained a continuous fire during the afternoon. Tongues of flame rose into the sky from the wagon park, a loud crash rent the air, most of the ammunition of the Boers had been blown up.

Besides the bombardment of the laager, Lord Roberts had to devote his attention to another very important factor in the military situation—the enemy's reinforcements, which were encroaching dangerously near our entrenchments. Kitchener's Kopje formed an important rallying point for them. From the kopje, De Wet threatened the flank of the British. It offered a refuge to fugitives from the laager, and also offered opportunities for communication outside. All through the 19th De Wet urged Cronje to make a determined attempt to break through the investment and join him. But the stubborn Dutch farmer refused to move. On the morning of the 19th, Broadwood, with the 10th Hussars, 12th Lancers, two squadrons of the Carabineers and G Battery Royal Horse Artillery, had, at Kitchener's request, crossed the river at Paardeberg Drift in order to drive the Boers away from the kopje. But when Broadwood endeavoured to approach the hill from the south, he "found it too strongly held to be able to justify an attack," and he retired, with his horses dead beat, to Paardeberg Drift. On hostilities being resumed, Lord Roberts determined that a fresh attempt should be made to capture the kopje. The

Gloucestershires had entrenched themselves in the position which they had occupied at the close of the fighting the previous evening, and all through the day had kept up a long-range fire with the Boers on the hill. Owing to the time taken in negotiating with Cronje, Lord Roberts was not able until late in the afternoon to issue the order that the Gloucestershires, with the Yorkshire and the Oxfordshire Light Infantry, should, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel the Hon. A. E. Dalzell, assault the kopje. The day had begun to close when the two battalions reached the Gloucestershires. Dalzell determined that the Gloucestershires should deliver the attack supported by the Yorkshires, while the Oxfordshires were to turn the enemy's flank. The Gloucestershires numbered only about four hundred of all ranks. Marching across the plain, they reached the foot of a small projecting spur of the hill. Lindsell, their gallant commander, ordered them to fix bayonets, and placing himself at their head, he led a daring charge up the slope. A fusillade from the Boers behind the rocks, and the gallant Lindsell fell; but the Gloucestershires rushed on, and the enemy retreated rapidly to their main position. Lindsell, though severely wounded, retained the command of the regiment, and ordered his men to entrench themselves. The next morning they were recalled from the spur. Guided by considerable experience of mountain warfare, Lord Roberts decided that a direct attack, to be successful, must be attended by a great loss of life. He could not afford to reduce further his weakened battalions. England had gone to war without any organised system for replacing trained private soldiers, non-commissioned officers and officers by men who had a sufficient continuous training. Lord Roberts determined that the position could be taken with less loss of life by menacing De Wet's rear with mounted troops.

On the 20th of February the 76th and 82nd Field Batteries

and the 65th Howitzer Battery, together with the three 4.7-in. and one 12-pounder naval gun, crossed to the right bank at Paardeberg Drift, and joined the 81st Field Battery on Gun Hill. The 18th, 62nd and 75th Batteries, with the remaining 4.7-in. and three 12-pounders, stayed on the left bank to the east of Signal Hill. In the afternoon these forty-four guns and six howitzers opened fire on the Boer laager and the entrenchment surrounding it. The air shook with the roar of artillery. The lyddite shells raised great clouds of green smoke, which filled the bed of the river, while shrapnel burst along the edge of each bank. Shells searched every bush and every ravine. A Boer doctor thus describes the position of the enemy:

"Nothing could be done but crouch in the trenches and wait till dusk prevented a further attack, while wagon after wagon in the laager caught fire, and burned away into a heap of scrap-iron surrounded by wood-ashes. The desolation was fearful, and it soon became impossible to make any reply."

On the 21st of February Lord Roberts, whose nature is essentially kind and gentle, wrote to Cronje as follows:

"I have only heard to-day that there are women and children in your laager. If this is the case, I will be happy to accord them a safe conduct through my lines to any place they may select. I must express my regret to you that these women and children were exposed to our fire during the late attacks. We did not know of their presence with your troops. I have also heard that you are in want of surgeons and medicines. If you require them, it will afford me great pleasure to send you either the one or the other."

The Boer leader replied:

"Safe conduct declined. I accept the offer of surgeons and medicines on the condition that when the surgeons have once

entered this laager, they must not leave it until I have removed it to another place."

Lord Roberts sent the only answer possible:

"I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of this morning, which is the reply to my offer to send you surgeons and medicines. In view of the conditions which you impose, and of the circumstance that I cannot dispense with my surgeons for so indefinite a period, I am compelled reluctantly to withdraw my offer."

On the morning of the 21st of February, French, whose headquarters had been moved down to Koodoosrand, began to carry out the manœuvres for investing the kopje. While he moved round to the south-east of the hill with cavalry and artillery, Broadwood, with cavalry, mounted troops and artillery, was to move round to the south-west until the investment was completed. At 9 A.M. De Wet discovered that the British were advancing in force from two directions in order to entrap him. "I had only a few shots left for the Krupp and thirty for the Maxim-Nordenfeldt, and this last ammunition must now be expended on the wings. One gun I dispatched to the right, the other to the left, and the English were checked in their advance. I had ordered the gunners, as soon as they had fired their last round, to bring their guns into safe positions in the direction of Petrusberg. Very soon I observed that this order was being executed, and thus learnt that the ammunition had run out."* De Wet saw the burghers, unable to use their big guns, and confronted by a superior force, gallop away towards Petrusberg.

"What was I to do?" says De Wet. "I was being bombarded incessantly, and since this morning had been severely harassed by small-arm fire. All this, however, I could have borne, but now the enemy began to surround me. It was a

* "Three Years' War," by C. R. De Wet, p. 60.

hard thing to be thus forced to abandon the key to General Cronje's escape. In all haste I ordered my men to retire. They had seen throughout that this was unavoidable, and had even said to me: 'If we remain here, general, we shall be surrounded with General Cronje.'" * The orders being given, the Boers descended the hill and dashed down the valley.

"Although I had foreseen that our escape would be a very difficult and lengthy business, I had not thought that we should have been in such danger of being made prisoners. But the English had very speedily taken up positions to the right and left with guns and Maxims, and for a good nine miles of our retreat we were under their fire. Notwithstanding the fact that during the whole of this time we were also harassed by small-arm fire, we lost—incredible as it may appear—not more than one killed and one wounded and a few horses besides. The positions which we had abandoned the British now occupied, hemming in General Cronje so closely that he had not the slightest chance of breaking through their lines." †

Lord Roberts obtained possession of the formidable Kitchener's Kopje, the key of the enemy's position, with the minimum loss of one man killed and two officers and four men wounded. On the 22nd Cronje sent the following crafty letter to the Commander-in-Chief:

"On second thoughts I beg to make the following proposal. You will supply me with a complete hospital equipment, surgeons and medicines, to whom free entry shall be accorded. I will then allow the hospital to be erected one thousand yards to the west of my laager." ‡

A hospital one thousand yards to the west of his laager would have given Cronje one thousand yards more cover along the river bank. Lord Roberts promptly replied: "I

* "Three Years' War," by C. R. De Wet. † *Ibid.*, p. 61.
‡ "German Official Account of the War," p. 264.

regret that I do not possess sufficient hospital equipment for my own men. If my original offer be not accepted, I am not in a position to make another."* The British troops had come with such light equipment that it had been a most difficult task to make proper arrangements for their own wounded. Most of them had to be kept in the open in great discomfort. "I am sorry for Cronje," Lord Roberts said, "for he must be in a desperate plight. He told me in his letter that he had no doctors and no medicines for his wounded. His laager is crowded with dead animals, which are also lying about in the bed of the river, and I hear the stench in his camp is indescribable. In one way he is better off than we are, for the bulk of our troops are about a mile and a half down stream, and it is sickening to see dead cattle and horses floating down in our only water supply, and to realise the dangerous pollution which is taking place above us. Yet there is no remedy for it, and all ranks are as cheerful as if they were undergoing no discomfort."

On the 22nd the Commander-in-Chief had sent Lord Kitchener to Naauwpoort "in view to assisting Lieutenant-Colonel Girouard in pushing the railway across the Orange River as soon as the enemy vacate the country in the south."† The same day the infantry working parties, assisted by the engineers, succeeded in pushing forward trenches along both banks. A novel reinforcement also reached the British camp. A balloon detachment arrived under the command of Lieutenant A. H. W. Grubb, R.E., and during the night, while the artillery, including the naval guns, fired hourly, the men in the balloon observed and signalled the effect of the fire. The German General Staff says the balloon "rendered quite excellent service during the following days by observing the

* "German Official Account of the War."

† "Official History," vol. ii., p. 165.

enemy, and it was from the balloon detachment that detailed and accurate information concerning the Boer position in the river valley below was first received. The attempts of the Boers to bring down the balloon by means of rifle fire were unsuccessful."

Meanwhile De Wet was reorganising the burghers in order to make a strenuous effort to recapture Kitchener's Kopje, which was tactically so important. He had been made Commander of all the Free State Forces, and had been reinforced by the Winburg and Senekal commandos, which reached Poplar Grove from Natal the very moment he escaped the British fire. Further reinforcements also reached him the following day, raising his force to about five thousand men. A *krejgsraad* (war council) was held, and it was decided "to recapture the positions I had abandoned," and "that the attack should be made by three separate parties." General Philip Botha with Commandant Theunissen was to attack Kitchener's Kopje and Stinkfontein from the south-east; General Froneman the position immediately to the north of these, and I, with General Andreas Cronje, others still further north." It was the intention of the Boers to creep up to the British position under the cover of darkness, and just before dawn Commandant Theunissen, with a part of a commando, crept forward, took possession of a thicket at the foot of the kopje, and opened a sharp musketry fire on the outpost line. The Yorkshires replied briskly. As light first crept over the veld a long line of dismounted Boers was seen moving across the plain towards the bushes. Volley after volley was fired at a range of fifteen hundred yards, but the Boers, advancing by rushes, reached the edge of the scrub and the bushes blazed with fire. On hearing the sound of musketry, the main body of the Yorkshires hurrying to the outpost, joined their comrades. A constant fire was maintained, but against riflemen

lying down in the bushes small impression was made. The air was alive with whistling bullets, but it was impossible to see whence they came. While the vigorous musketry duel was in progress the 75th Field Battery, the Buffs and Essex regiments arrived. As these reinforcements began to move forward, Botha, realising the danger of a flank attack, withdrew the main body, and the burghers, remounting their horses, galloped across the veld. The two other parties of Boers which were farther to the north soon followed their example. But Theunissen and nearly one hundred men remained and defended the under-feature until noon, when, their horses having been all lost or killed, they were compelled to surrender.* "The burghers who were present at the engagement," says De Wet, "accused General Botha, while he declared that Theunissen had been imprudent. However that may be, we had failed in our essay. The position had not been taken, and Commandant Theunissen, with a hundred whom we could ill spare, were in the hands of the enemy. And to make matters still worse, our men were already seized with panic, arising from the now hopeless plight of General Cronje and his large force." † De Wet does not explain why his and Froneman's attacks were mere feeble demonstrations.

De Wet was, however, not prepared "to abandon all hope as yet." Danie Theron, "that famous captain" of the Boer Intelligence Scouts, had arrived the previous day. "I asked him if he would take a verbal message," says De Wet, "to General Cronje. I dare not send a written one lest it should fall into the hands of the English. Proud and distinct the answer came at once—the only answer which such a hero as Danie Theron could have given:

"'Yes, general, I will go.'

* "Official History," vol. ii., p. 170.

† "Three Years' War," by C. R. De Wet, p. 62.

"The risk which I was asking him to run could not have been surpassed throughout the whole of our sanguinary struggle.

"I took him aside and told him that he must go and tell General Cronje that our fate depended upon the escape of himself and of the thousands with him, and that, if he should fall into the enemy's hands, it would be the death-blow to all our hopes. Theron was to urge Cronje to abandon the laager and everything contained in it, to fight his way out by night, and to meet me at two named places, where I would protect him from the pursuit of the English." *

On the night of the 24th-25th, Danie Theron started on his daring errand. In the darkness and the pouring rain he crawled past the British sentries, tearing his trousers to rags during the process. "The blood was running from his knees where the skin was scraped off." The river was reached—the heavy rains had caused it to rise many feet—he plunged into the raging torrent, and, swimming to the farther bank, reached the laager to find an atmosphere of misery, gloom, and despair. He telegraphed to President Kruger the next day: †

"The state of affairs in the laager is indescribably miserable and dreadful. General Cronje and his wife are well. There are about twenty-five dead and fifty wounded. It is heart-rending to see how men who have been comparatively slightly wounded perish and die owing to want of nursing and proper food. General Cronje said there was hardly sufficient food for to-day. There are still about one hundred horses in the laager in a critical state owing to want of food, for as soon as they go one hundred yards from the laager they run the risk of being shot. The Lee-Metford bullets whistle over our heads

* "Three Years' War," by C. R. De Wet, p. 62.

† Theron returned to De Wet on the morning of the 27th.

the whole day long. The English seem to have stationed sharp-shooters in the immediate neighbourhood of the laager, who, throughout the whole day, make our lives unsafe. They have now even dug trenches in some places. The laager is completely surrounded, is being enfiladed by a number of guns which are bombarding it from all sides. Our people are seeking protection in trenches, holes, and in the banks of the river, and when it rains like it did the night before last, one can only with the greatest difficulty get from one place to another. There does not seem to be much sickness among our people. This is surprising, for the putrefying and pestilential dead horses are lying in hundreds among the people, and the stench is almost unbearable. Most of the wagons and other things have been burnt. I went to propose to General Cronje a plan to break through—how, where, and when. He agrees with it, but most of his officers and men are unwilling.* The general and I and a few others yesterday went about among the men and did everything to encourage them and to make them willing; but half of them are so disheartened and depressed that they really no longer mind falling into the enemy's hands." † Cronje, to appease the discontent of his men, promised that he would surrender on the 28th.

On the afternoon of the 26th Lord Roberts issued orders that a night attack should be made on a flanking trench which ran northwards from the river and covered a series of Boer entrenchments parallel to the right bank. The 19th Brigade, under Smith-Dorrien, and the 7th Royal Engineers, had constructed on the north bank a line of trenches which, after running exactly at right angles to the river, turned gradually to the north-east towards the west face of the laager. In con-

* "Official History," vol. ii., pp. 170-171.

† De Wet writes: "He (Theron) told me that he had seen the General, who had said that he did not think that the plan which I had proposed had any chance of success."—"Three Years' War," p. 63.

SURRENDER OF CRONJE TO LORD ROBERTS

From a Photograph in the possession of Lord Roberts

THE ADVANCE ON PRETORIA: TRANSPORTS CROSSING THE ZAND RIVER

From a Photograph by Underwood and Underwood

tinuation a similar trench was constructed for a short distance on the south bank. The two sides of the trenches on the northern bank enclosed a scrub, but between the north-east end and the Boer flanking trench the ground was open. As it was the turn of the Canadians to occupy the main trench, to them was assigned the honour of leading the assault. Six companies, about 480 men in all, were to advance simultaneously in two lines with one pace interval between each man and fifteen feet distance between the lines. The front line of each company was to advance with fixed bayonets, the second following with shovels and picks in their hands. Captain Boileau, with about thirty men of the 7th Company of Royal Engineers under Lieutenant-Colonel Kincaid, was to accompany the advance on the right of the second line. Three companies of the Gordons were to hold the north-eastern portion of the trench, and the Shropshires were extended beyond it. The second company of the Canadians was held in reserve in a work behind the rectangular portion of the trench. Five companies of the Gordon Highlanders were extended five hundred yards behind them. The first company of the Canadians was placed in the trench on the right bank.

At 2.15 A.M. on the 27th of February the advance began in the formation which had been ordered. The Commanding Officer of the Canadians—Lieutenant-Colonel W. D. Otter—moved in rear of the front rank on the left, while Lieutenant-Colonel L. Buchan led the line on the left and Lieutenant-Colonel O. C. Pelletier on the right. Major-General Smith-Dorrien superintended the attack from the right of the line. Covered by the darkness, the Canadians in dead silence moved forward. Making their way through the scrub with difficulty, they had approached within a hundred yards of the enemy's flanking defence when two rifle shots disturbed the quietness of the veld, and instantly there came from the Boer trenches a stream

of fire. The front line, throwing themselves on the ground, at once vigorously replied. The rear rank and the Royal Engineers began to dig the trench—a very ticklish task in the open, one hundred yards from the Boer trench. The two right companies, under Captain H. B. Stairs and Lieutenant A. H. Macdonell, had found some slight cover in a fold of the ground eighteen inches high, but the four left companies lay entirely in the open. They began to suffer severely from want of any shelter. "Then an authoritative voice, the identity of which was never discovered, was heard calling out, 'Retire and bring back your wounded.'"* The four companies on the left obeyed and retired. The 7th and 8th companies on the right wing remaining firm,† kept up a vigorous fire while the trench was being quickly made by their second line and the engineers. When dawn broke the two companies were within a trench, "though roughly reveted and loop-holed with sandbags." The position they occupied enfiladed securely the Boers' rifle trenches along the river and the embrasures on the north. "This apparently," as Roberts telegraphed, "clinched matters." A white flag was hoisted from the trench, the firing ceased, and the majority of the Boers in the trench surrendered. The advance of the Canadians was, to use the words of Lord Roberts, "a gallant deed worthy of our Colonial comrades."

At daylight on the day on which the Boers used to hold high festival in commemoration of their victory at Majuba Hill, Cronje sent Roberts the following letter:

"Headquarter Laager, Modder River.

"*February 27th,* 1900.

"Honoured Sir,

"Herewith I have the honour to inform you that the council of war, which was held here last evening, resolved to surrender

* "Official History," vol. ii., p. 175.

† The "German Official Account," p. 209, states that they did not hear the order.

unconditionally with the forces here, being compelled to do so under existing circumstances. They therefore throw themselves on the clemency of her Britannic Majesty.

"As a sign of surrender a white flag will be hoisted from 6 A.M. to-day. The council of war requests that you will give immediate orders for all further hostilities to be stopped in order that more loss of life may be prevented.—I have, etc.,

"P. A. CRONJE, *General.*"

The Commander-in-Chief replied:

"HONOURED SIR,

"Your letter of this date is to hand. It gives me great pleasure to accept your unconditional surrender. I shall be glad to receive you here in person, and to take care of you. Your burghers will, if you please, come out on to the plain without arms, which must be left in the laager under supervision of a guard. The officer who takes this letter will conduct you to my camp. Please accompany him." *

Lord Roberts in his khaki uniform, without a badge of rank except his Kandahar sword, awaited the Boer general. At 8 A.M. Cronje arrived in camp, "a short, strongly-built man of about sixty, with a determined, coarse, cruel face." The Commander-in-Chief saluted him and offered him refreshments in his tent.† In the course of conversation Cronje asked for kind treatment at our hands and also that his wife, grandson, private secretary, adjutants and servants might accompany him wherever he might be sent. The Commander-in-Chief reassured him and told him his requests would be complied with. Chief Commandant Wolmarans, of the Transvaal Army, "a fine-

* "Official History of the War," vol. ii., p. 177.

† Lord Roberts never uttered the words attributed to him by the German General Staff: "You have made a gallant defence, Sir."—The "German Official Account," p. 210.

looking old fellow rather like a Scotch shepherd," made only one request—that he might not be deprived of a favourite old horse—which, of course, the British commander granted. The British soldiers treated their beaten foe with the same courtesy that Lord Roberts had shown their leader.

"The troops followed the good example of the Commander-in-Chief," says the German General Staff, "and vied with each other in providing their half-starved prisoners with food and drink. Every one gave most generously of the little he had, and the prisoners were treated with every consideration."

A German officer, who had fought on the side of the Boers, and was also a prisoner, relates: "The treatment the English officers and soldiers gave us was thoroughly friendly and humane. Not only the officers, but even the Tommies behaved to the prisoners like thorough gentlemen." *

By midday the laager was in the occupation of the British soldier. So ended the pursuit and investment of Cronje, "a striking proof," says the German Staff, "of the energy and firmness of the higher officers, of the intelligent co-operation and initiative of the lower officers, and of the devotion of the troops in their willing endurance of exertions and privations." †

During the afternoon the Boer prisoners, 3,919 fighting men, were marched under escort to Klip Drift, and from there

* "Considering the many errors about the English mode of carrying on war," writes the German Staff, "which an ill-informed Press has spread broadcast over the world, it appears to be our duty as truth-loving historians to lay stress on the fact, from our knowledge of the actual circumstances, that so long as any regularly organised commandos confronted them in the field, the English methods of warfare were characterised by chivalry and humanity, as were also those of the Boers themselves. It was only when the loosely organised, badly disciplined Boer militia bands broke up, and the majority of the Boers who remained in the field assumed the character of irregular fighters, that the obliteration of the distinction between a genuine fighting force and a hostile people naturally caused an increasing bitterness among the much harassed English troops, and made the harsh means employed in the war not only explicable but necessary."—*Blackwood's Magazine,* 1905, p. 491.

† *Blackwood's Magazine,* 1905, p. 491.

to Modder River Station for transport by rail to Cape Town. Cronje with his family had been previously sent in a Cape cart to the station and taken in a special train to Cape Town under the charge of a general officer in order to ensure his being treated with proper respect *en route*. On the 4th of March 1900, Cronje and party "were comfortably established on board H.M.S. *Doris*," which conveyed them to St. Helena. It was a melancholy end for one who as a commander had been extolled above any of his countrymen. "With a subtle skill had Cronje constructed and held his lines at Magersfontein, wonderfully did he effect his retreat to Paardeberg, and stubbornly did he fight," but twice in twenty-four hours he neglected "those happy occasions which in war take birth and flight at the same instant." *

Lord Roberts by his well-conceived plan, his promptness of action, and by taking the legitimate amount of risk, without which no commander can gather the full harvest of success, had suddenly decided the whole fate of the campaign. Kimberley had been relieved, the lines of Magersfontein were in our possession, Cronje and his army were prisoners, the Boers had withdrawn from their positions in Cape Colony. What Roberts had written to the Secretary of State for War on the 6th of February came to pass: "This operation will, I trust, cause the Boers to reduce the force which they have concentrated round Ladysmith and enable our garrison there to be

* General De Wet writes: "I must repeat here what I have said before, that as far as my personal knowledge of General Cronje goes, it is evident to me that his obstinacy in maintaining his position must be ascribed to the fact that it was too much to ask him—intrepid hero that he was—to abandon the laager. His view was that he must stand or fall with it, nor did he consider the certain consequences of his capture. He never realised that it would be the cause of the death of many burghers, and of indescribable panic throughout not only all the laagers on the veld, but even those of Colesberg, Stormberg and Ladysmith. If the famous Cronje were captured, how could any ordinary burgher be expected to continue his resistance?"—"Three Years' War," by De Wet, p. 63.

relieved before the end of February." On the 27th of February Buller drove back the weakening force with which Louis Botha held the Tugela. On the 28th Ladysmith was relieved.

The news of the relief of Ladysmith was received with great enthusiasm throughout the Empire. Messages of congratulation from all quarters of the British Dominions reached Lord Roberts. But the one which gave him special pleasure was from General Lockhart on behalf of the army in India. "Warm congratulations to their old Chief and best friend."

CHAPTER XII

ADVANCE ON BLOEMFONTEIN

On the 2nd of March Lord Roberts established his headquarters at Osfontein. His original intention was to march towards Bloemfontein as soon as Cronje's force had surrendered; but the cavalry and artillery horses were so exhausted by their rapid march to Kimberley and back, and so weakened by the scarcity of forage, that he found it absolutely necessary to give them a week's rest. Meanwhile, reports reached the Commander-in-Chief that the enemy were collecting in considerable strength to the east of Osfontein, and were entrenching themselves along a line of kopjes running north and south, about eight miles distant from the camp at Osfontein. The northernmost, Leeuw Kopje, was to the north of and two miles distant from the river; and the southernmost cluster of kopjes, to which the name of the "Seven Sisters" was given, was eight miles south of the river. The front of the Boer position extended there for ten and a half miles.* Table Mountain, a flat-topped kopje which formed a salient to the centre of the alignment, was the key of the enemy's position. On the 6th of March Lord Roberts gave orders for an attack on the enemy's position. Early the following morning:

"The Cavalry Division, with Alderson's and Ridley's brigades of Mounted Infantry and seven batteries of horse artillery, was directed to march at 2 A.M., its object being to circle round the left flank of the Boers, to take their line of

* From Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, Government House, Bloemfontein, 15th March, 1900, to the Secretary of State for War.

entrenchments in reverse, and moving eventually to the river near Poplar Grove, to cut off their line of retreat. The 6th Division, under Lieutenant-General Kelly-Kenny, with its brigade division of field artillery, one howitzer battery and Martyr's Mounted Infantry, was to follow the route taken by the cavalry until reaching a point south-east of the "Seven Sisters." It was then to drive the enemy from these kopjes, and afterwards move to the north in the direction of Table Mountain.

"In the attack on Table Mountain the 6th Division was to be assisted by Flint's brigade division of field artillery, four 4.7-inch naval guns, Le Gallais' brigade of mounted infantry, and the Guards Brigade. This latter force was to concentrate at daybreak near a small kopje and farm distant two miles to the east of Osfontein Farm, where my headquarters had been established. Table Mountain being the key of the enemy's position, I anticipated that the Boers would retire to the river as soon as it was occupied by our troops.

"The 14th Brigade of the 7th Division of field artillery, Nesbitt's Horse, and the New South Wales and Queensland Mounted Infantry were ordered to march eastward along the south bank of the river for the purpose of threatening the enemy, distracting attention from the main attack on Table Mountain, and assisting the cavalry in preventing the Boers from crossing the river at the Poplar Grove Drift. The 9th Division, with three naval 12-pounders and mounted infantry under Lieutenant-Colonels De Lisle and Henry, was instructed to act in a similar manner on the north bank of the river, and to drive the enemy from the Leeuw Kopje, which formed the northern extremity of their defensive position." *

On the 7th of March the operations were carried out in

* From Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, Government House, Bloemfontein, 15th March, 1900, to the Secretary of State for War.

accordance with the above plan of operations; but the 6th Division, making too wide a detour to the south, reached the "Seven Sisters" after the Boers had been dislodged by the Horse Artillery fire in reverse, and the shell-fire of the naval guns in front. The turning movement of the cavalry and the advance of the infantry division north and south of the river caused the enemy to evacuate Table Mountain and Leeuw Kopje without offering any serious opposition. They showed the Boers' usual adroitness in getting away almost all their guns and wagons. Their rearguard maintained a bold front while the rest of the force was busy inspanning. Lord Roberts writes:

"Had the cavalry, horse artillery, and mounted infantry been able to move more rapidly, they would undoubtedly have intercepted the enemy's line of retreat, and I should have had the satisfaction of capturing their guns, wagons and supplies, as well as a large number of prisoners. The failure to effect this object was the more mortifying when I learned the next day on good authority that the Presidents of the Orange Free State and South African Republic had been present during the engagement, and had strongly urged the Boers to continue their resistance. Their appeals to the burghers were, however, unavailing, as the Boer forces were quite broken and refused to fight any longer."

A Boer who took part in the fight at Poplar Grove informs me that neither the President of the Orange Free State nor the President of the South African Republic was present. He admits that they were confident the British would have made a frontal attack, and they would, in their impregnable sheltered positions, have been able to hold the English at bay and inflict a terrible loss. The turning movement was to them a complete and painful surprise.

The fight at Poplar Grove showed that the Commander-in-Chief was determined to "avoid great losses" not under *all*

circumstances, according to an *ex cathedra* statement of the German General Staff, but under special circumstances. A frontal attack on Table Mountain would not have annihilated the enemy's forces. After having inflicted the maximum of loss, they would have retreated the moment we came to close quarters. Lord Roberts manœuvred in order to cut off their retreat, and he would have inflicted on them a heavy loss but for the inability of his cavalry to pursue. The German statement that the troops had quickly realised that the confidence of the Commander-in-Chief in their capacity was shattered can hardly be correct, when we remember that the troops were flushed with their recent successes at Kimberley and Paardeberg.*

On the 8th and 9th the force halted at Poplar Grove. On the 10th it again advanced in three columns on Bloemfontein. The left column under General French, consisting of Colonel Porter's cavalry brigade (18th), Alderson's mounted infantry, and General Kelly-Kenny's Division (6th), advanced along the Modder. The centre column, which Lord Roberts accompanied, consisting of General Colvile's Division (9th), General Pole Carew's Brigade of Guards, and Colonel Broadwood's Brigade (2nd) of cavalry, advanced towards Driefontein. The right column, consisting of General Tucker's Division (7th), with the Gordons and the 3rd Cavalry Brigade, moved along the Petrusberg Road. The left column found the enemy holding several large kopjes behind Abraham's Kraal or Driefontein, and endeavoured to turn their left flank by moving to the south. "They, however, anticipated this manœuvre by a rapid march southward, and took up a fresh position on a ridge about four miles long, running north and south across the road, two miles east of Driefontein. Lieutenant-General French followed up the enemy with the 1st Cavalry Brigade

* *Blackwood's Magazine*, 1905, p. 493.

and the 6th Division and came into contact with them about 11 A.M." *

The 2nd Cavalry Brigade had by this time reached Driefontein and endeavoured, in conjunction with the 1st Cavalry Brigade, to turn the rear of the Boers by operating in the plain behind the ridge which they were holding. "The enemy's guns, however, had a longer range than our field-guns, which were the only ones immediately available, and some time elapsed before the former could be silenced, especially a Creusot gun which had been placed in a commanding position on an isolated kopje two and half miles east of the north end of the ridge." † About 2 P.M. the 6th Division reached this end of the ridge. T Battery Royal Horse Artillery prepared the way for the infantry advance, shelling the Boer centre vigorously from the south.

"Here occurred an instance of the admirable coolness and splendid behaviour of our artillery. As T Battery came into action the enemy opened a heavy and accurate fire on it with their Vickers-Maxim, killing two men and several horses. The men were engaged in unhitching the gun at the time, but within two minutes the same gun fired the first shot, the artillery carrying ammunition over the bodies of their fallen comrades. U Battery, which occupied a position to the north of the Boer centre, shelled the ridges thoroughly, but on the arrival of the 76th Field Battery moved close to T Battery. The 76th Battery then took up a position closer to the Boers, where it was able effectively to shell the ridge towards which the Welsh were moving. The gunners encountered a heavy rifle fire, but they worked coolly and unconcernedly with a great effect." ‡

* From Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, Government House, Bloemfontein, 15th March, 1900, to the Secretary of State for War.

† *Ibid.* ‡ The *Times*, Weekly Edition, March 16, 1900.

All this time the infantry were advancing steadily under heavy fire, and the Boers were gradually pushed back towards the centre of the ridge, where they made an obstinate stand.

About 5 P.M. the 9th Division came up, and Lord Roberts at once ordered the Guards Brigade and the 19th Brigade to the assistance of the 6th Division. "But before these reinforcements could reach the ridge the enemy's position was stormed in the most gallant manner by the 1st Battalions of the Essex and Welsh Regiments, supported by the 2nd Battalion of the Buffs. The bodies of 102 Boers were afterwards found along the ridge, mainly in the position which they held to the last." Our casualties were heavy: 4 officers were killed and 20 wounded, and 60 men killed and 314 wounded.

On the following day, the 11th of March, the combined left and centre columns marched to Aasvogel Kop. Lord Roberts ordered the 3rd Cavalry Brigade, with two batteries of horse artillery, to proceed from Driekop to Venter's Vallei. Next morning (12th of March) with the 6th and 9th Divisions he resumed his march to Bloemfontein. The direct road to the capital now lay due east, and a large body of Boers under Joubert manned the heights commanding it. Our infantry advanced towards them. A fight was expected, but on reaching a point two miles from the enemy's fastness the column turned abruptly to the right, leaving the Boers alone in their position. "Throughout the day the Boers looked down upon fifteen miles of transport passing them without a shot being fired on either side, conscious that twelve miles ahead, beyond all hope of check, the leading troopers of our cavalry were sweeping a clear course before them almost up to the gates of Bloemfontein. It was a masterly stroke, and has succeeded to the full." * That evening Lord Roberts's column halted at

* The *Times*, Weekly Edition, 13th April, 1900.

Venter's Vallei. The men had, on reduced rations, marched forty miles in two days, through a desert almost devoid of water. "But every man," writes one who was present, "is willing to work till he drops for Lord Roberts." Their commander was everywhere at once, cheering the men exhausted by fatigue and hunger, lavishing encouraging words on them and appeals to duty.

On reaching Venter's Vallei Lord Roberts heard that reinforcements were hourly expected at Bloemfontein. It was imperatively necessary to forestall the enemy's movements. French was ordered to push on to Brand Dam Kop, seven miles to the south-west of Bloemfontein; but his jaded horses could proceed only at a trot, and it was near midnight before he occupied two hills, near the railway station, which commanded Bloemfontein. That night a gallant deed was done. Major Hunter-Weston, R.E., attached to the Cavalry Division, with a handful of Alderson's mounted infantry, broke up the railway north and south of Bloemfontein. "And this enterprising officer also succeeded in cutting the enemy's telegraph and telephone wires in both directions." *

An hour after noon, on the 13th of March, Lord Roberts at the head of his troops, moving with a smartness as if on a review ground, entered the capital of the Orange Free State, and one of the great marches of history was brought to a close. In twenty-nine days he had, 700 miles from his base, moved 40,000 men, 20,000 horse and a vast convoy across a barren stretch of country, where no provisions were to be found, and water only once in the day. This had been done under a burning sun and in the face of a watchful enemy. It had been rapidly and successfully executed, because

* From Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, Government House, Bloemfontein, 15th March, 1900, to the Secretary of State for War.

the commander knew how to draw on that inexhaustible bank —the good spirits and endurance of the British soldier; and because he himself had attended to every detail in giving orders, and had kept a close watch on the execution of his behests. But not unto himself, but his soldiers, did the general give the praise. On the 14th of March he issued the following Army Orders:

"It affords the Field-Marshal Commanding-in-Chief the greatest pleasure in congratulating the army in South Africa on the various events that have occurred during the past few weeks, and he would specially offer his sincere thanks to that portion of the army which, under his immediate command, have taken part in the operations resulting yesterday in the capture of Bloemfontein.

"On the 12th of February this force crossed the boundary which divided the Orange Free State from British territory. Three days later Kimberley was relieved. On the fifteenth day the bulk of the Boer army in this State, under one of their most trusted generals, were made prisoners. On the seventeenth day the news of the relief of Ladysmith was received, and on the 13th of March, twenty-nine days from the commencement of the operations, the capital of the Orange Free State was occupied.

"This is a record of which any army may well be proud —a record which could not have been achieved except by earnest, well-disciplined men, determined to do their duty and to surmount whatever difficulties or dangers might be encountered.

"Exposed to extreme heat by day, bivouacking under heavy rain, marching long distances (not infrequently with reduced rations), the endurance, cheerfulness and gallantry displayed by all ranks are beyond praise, and Lord Roberts feels sure that neither Her Majesty the Queen nor the British nation

will be unmindful of the efforts made by this force to uphold the honour of their country.

"The Field-Marshal desires especially to refer to the fortitude and heroic spirit with which the wounded have borne their sufferings. Owing to the great extent of country over which modern battles have to be fought, it is not always possible to afford immediate aid to those who are struck down; many hours have, indeed, at times elapsed before some of the wounded could be attended to, but not a word of murmur or complaint has been uttered: the anxiety of all, when succour came, was that their comrades should be cared for first.

"In assuring every officer and man how much he appreciates their efforts in the past, Lord Roberts is confident that in the future they will continue to show the same resolution and soldierly qualities, and to lay down their lives, if need be (as so many brave men have already done), in order to ensure that the war in South Africa may be brought to a satisfactory conclusion."

As Lord Roberts states in his dispatch to the Secretary of State for War, dated the 31st of March, 1900, no account of his march from Jacobsdal to Bloemfontein would be complete without special attention being drawn "to the good services performed by the splendid and highly efficient body of troops from other parts of Her Majesty's Empire, which have, while serving under my orders, borne a distinguished share in the advance into the Orange Free State.

"The various contingents from Australia, from New Zealand and from Ceylon, the several corps which have been formed locally in the Cape Colony, and the City of London Imperial Volunteers, have vied one with the other in the performance of their duty. They have shared with the Regular troops of Her Majesty's Army the hardships and dangers of the campaign in a manner which have gained for them the respect

and admiration of all who have been associated with them. I trust that your Lordship will concur with me in considering that by their valour and endurance the soldiers and sailors serving in the force which is under my immediate command have worthily upheld the best tradition of Her Majesty's Army and Navy."

CHAPTER XIII

JOHANNESBURG AND PRETORIA

On his entry into Bloemfontein, Lord Roberts met "with a cordial reception from the inhabitants, a number of whom accompanied the troops, singing 'God save the Queen' and 'Rule Britannia.'" Like all great commanders, he had now to consider the political effect of his operations. Between England and the inhabitants of the Orange Free State there had been no jealousy of conflicting interests or other causes of quarrel. Their prosperous and well-governed republic had been precipitated into the horrors of war and invasion by the ambition of their president, and the attitude of the inhabitants of the capital created a belief that the bulk of the Free State farmers were tired of a struggle into which they had not entered of their own free will. The British commander, therefore, had every reason to hope that, by a generous policy of conciliation, he would make the ultimate pacification of the country more easy. He issued a proclamation, warning all burghers to desist from any further hostility towards Her Majesty's Government and the troops under his command; "and I undertake that any of them who may so desist, and are found staying in their homes and quietly pursuing their ordinary occupations, will not be made to suffer in their persons or their property on account of their having taken up arms in obedience to the orders of their Government." Many burghers surrendered their arms and their horses, and took an oath to abstain from further hostilities against Her Majesty's Government.

Lord Roberts's advance had been so rapid, and his operations so decisive, that the Boer force opposed to him, crushed and overborne, retired to Kroonstad. The commandoes which were in the northern districts of Cape Colony crossed the Orange River, and retreated in a northerly direction along the Basutoland border and the fertile district of Ladybrand. Had the British commander been able to strike another blow while the Boers still reeled from those he had given them, much good would have accrued; but his army was, for the time, paralysed by the unusual exertions it had been called upon to make. He arrived at Bloemfontein with horses wholly starved and men half starved. He had to restore his men and his cattle; he had to collect supplies from his base—for the country itself afforded but little food—and he had to reorganise his transport before he attempted to regain the offensive. A long halt became imperative. The Boers, on learning the condition of the British Army, were stirred on to renewed activity, and "they showed considerable strategical skill by occupying Ladybrand and by concentrating a large force below Brandfort and Thabanchu."* This gave them free access to the south-eastern districts of the Orange Free State. Bodies of adventurous men, nurtured in hardship and familiar with every contour of the land, scoured the country, cut off small parties who were engaged in distributing the proclamation, and menaced our communications. A certain number of Free State burghers broke their oaths, and rejoined the commandoes. They conspired together to give information. They attacked our troops. They used their homesteads as depots for food and ammunition. Lord Roberts's policy of conciliation had not proved a success, but it was wise and statesmanlike.

* From Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, Kroonstad, 21st May, 1900, to the Secretary of State for War.

Johannesburg and Pretoria

On the 7th of April, 1900, Lord Roberts wrote to me from Bloemfontein :

"The enforced delay here is unfortunate in many ways, but I cannot possibly move until the artillery and cavalry are practically rehorsed. I shall be here another fortnight at least. I trust then nothing will prevent my moving steadily on to Kroonstad. We shall, of course, be opposed *en route,* but by that time my force ought to be able to overcome any number the Boers can put into the field. Meanwhile we are being a good deal worried; the Boers are spreading over the country in small parties, cutting off supplies, turning the people against us, and threatening the line of railway."

Carefully to guard the lines of railway, and to collect a force strong enough to drive the enemy north of the Brandfort-Thabanchu line, now became the British commander's primary aim. Until that was done, it was impossible for him to make the next move in his plan of campaign. To that plan of campaign he was determined, if possible, to adhere, "and not to be led into diverting from it, for operations of subsidiary importance, the troops which I required to attain my main objective—namely, to advance in adequate strength through the northern portion of the Orange Free State on Johannesburg and Pretoria." * An operation of subsidiary importance was the relief of Mafeking. The public mind at home had been much excited by exaggerated rumours sent by correspondents regarding the state of affairs in that town. But Lord Roberts knew that the garrison had ample supplies of food to support them till the middle of June. He promised to relieve them by the 18th of May. "History is," writes Kinglake, "replete with proof that the boldest captains have ever been those who, far from striking at random and with

* From Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, Kroonstad, 21st May, 1900, to the Secretary of State for War.

half-formed notions of what they might do, have always had clear conceptions of their objects, and the way in which they meant to succeed." Lord Roberts had a clear conception of his object and the way he meant to succeed. As the task of relieving Ladysmith had been rendered more easy by his hurling himself on Bloemfontein, so Mafeking would be released by his throwing himself on the capital of the Transvaal.

By the beginning of May, Lord Roberts had all the strategical points on the south-eastern district securely held, and he was no longer anxious for the safety of his railway. The condition of his army had materially improved. It had been increased from 40,000 men to 70,000. Six thousand horses, besides mules, had been sent up by train along a single line of railway more than 900 miles long, every bridge of which for the last 128 miles had been destroyed by the enemy. Ammunition, food for men and horses, clothes and requirements for the sick—all, in fact, that a great army should need—were brought to Bloemfontein in five weeks on a single track of railway—a wonderful feat of transportation, of which any country might be proud. When his supplies had been collected and the arrangements of the transport completed, Lord Roberts ordered a forward movement towards Kroonstad. On the 1st of May, the 11th (Pole-Carew's) Division left Bloemfontein, and marched with bands playing along the northern road. On the 3rd of May the Commander-in-Chief left Bloemfontein and joined them at Karee Siding, and placed himself again at the head of the army on their way to the capital of the Transvaal. More than two hundred miles of rolling country, crossed by rivers, remained to be traversed. "The 1st (Hutton's) Brigade of Mounted Infantry had moved to Brakpan, ten miles to the west, while Lieut.-General Tucker, with the 15th (Wavell's) Brigade of the 7th Division, was two

miles to the east of the siding; the 14th (Maxwell's) Brigade was at Vlakfontein, five miles farther east. Beyond it was Major-General Ian Hamilton's force, at Isabellafontein, a little north of Karee, and due south of Wynberg.*

On the 3rd of May, the force moving forward in this order, the little town of Brandfort, ten miles north of Karee, was occupied. The following day Pole-Carew's and Tucker's Divisions, with the 1st Brigade of Mounted Infantry, remained in the vicinity of Brandfort, while Ian Hamilton engaged and drove back the enemy's rear-guard about fifteen miles south of Wynberg. "On this occasion the junction of the two Boer forces was frustrated by a well-executed movement of the Household Cavalry, the 12th Lancers, and Kitchener's Horse under the command of Lieut.-Colonel the Earl of Airlie. The enemy fled after the encounter, leaving their dead and wounded on the field." †

On the 5th of May Lord Roberts's main column marched to within three miles of the Vet River, the north bank of which was held in considerable force:

"For three hours the action was chiefly confined to artillery on both sides, our field and naval guns making excellent practice; but just before dark the mounted infantry executed a turning movement, crossing the river six miles west of the railway bridge, which, like other bridges over the rivers along our line of advance, had been previously destroyed by the enemy. In this affair the Canadian, New South Wales, New Zealand Mounted Infantry, and the Queensland Mounted

* This consisted of the 2nd Cavalry Brigade under Brigadier-General Broadwood, the 2nd Brigade of Mounted Infantry under Brigadier-General Ridley, Brigadier-General Smith-Dorrien's brigade of the 9th Division, and a newly formed brigade (21st)—composed of 1st Battalion Sussex, 1st Battalion Derbyshires, the 1st Battalion Cameron Highlanders, and the City Imperial Volunteer Battalion—under the command of Major-General Bruce Hamilton.

† From Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, Kroonstad, 21st May, 1900, to the Secretary of State for War.

Rifles vied with each other in their efforts to close with the enemy. We captured one Maxim gun and twenty-six prisoners, our losses being slight."*

That day Major-General Ian Hamilton captured Wynberg "after an engagement at Bobeansberg, in which the 2nd Battalion Black Watch, under Lieut.-Colonel Carthew-Yorstoun, greatly distinguished themselves." †

On the 6th of May the main force crossed the Vet River unopposed, and occupied Smalldal Junction. Here it had to halt for two days owing to the difficulty of getting the baggage and supply convoys across the river. The mounted infantry, however, pushed on to Welgelegen, and Major-General Ian Hamilton's force moved some ten miles north of Wynberg, its place there having been taken by the Highland Brigade.‡ That day Lord Roberts galloped across country to see General Ian Hamilton. "He has made," writes a correspondent, "a most strict examination of farmhouses, with the result that Mauser and Martini rifles, with abundance of ammunition, were found in nearly every house." Lord Roberts permitted treachery, that was proved, to be punished, but he issued stringent orders to prevent the troops plundering those who had kept the letter of their oath. He has been accused of having refused longer than was wise to allow reprisals; but history will record that his goodness of heart made possible a reconciliation which in the hour of desperate strife seemed hopeless.

On the 8th and 9th of May Lord Roberts was joined by French with the 1st (Porter's), 3rd (Gordon's), and 4th (Dickson's) Brigades of Cavalry. The 1st and 4th Cavalry Brigades and the mounted infantry, marching on the left, moved on to

* From Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, Kroonstad, 21st May, 1900, to the Secretary of State for War.

† *Ibid.* ‡ *Ibid.*

the south bank of the Zand, opposite Dupreez' laager. "That evening a squadron of the Scots Greys succeeded in crossing the river near Verneulen's Kraal, and holding the drift at that point. The 7th Division bivouacked near Merriesfontein, and Major-General Ian Hamilton marched to Bloemplaatz, and pushed on the 1st Battalion Derbyshire Regiment to Junction Drift." *

On the morning of the 10th of May the enemy were seen holding the north bank of the Zand in considerable strength. Their line stretched in front for twenty miles, and the ground was very favourable to them. It was a vast rolling plain studded with farmhouses, and broken with ravines where Boer marksmen could be cunningly hid, and small groups of hills where batteries could be planted. On the east was a series of low kopjes, trending from the river inland. A frontal attack must lead to a grave loss of life. Lord Roberts therefore determined to try again "old Frederick's" favourite turning movement. He instructed French, with the Cavalry Brigades, supported by the 1st Mounted Infantry Brigade, under Major-General Hutton, to make a wide turning movement on the left. He directed Ross and Henry's mounted infantry-men to seize the drift near the railway bridge in the centre. Ian Hamilton was to cross by the Junction Drift and attack the enemy's left. At 7.30 A.M. the 7th Division crossed the Junction Drift, and as the leading corps, leaving the river, advanced on the opposite ridge, they were received with a fire of musketry. Ian Hamilton at once sent across the river the Cavalry Brigade, and the 21st and 19th Brigades to support them. General Tucker shelled the kopjes in front of him, and after an hour his troops, pressing forward, found the Boers had abandoned their position. A body of them had taken up a new position on two low rocky

* From Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, Kroonstad, 21st May, 1900, to the Secretary of State for War.

kopjes, on the summit of which they had placed three guns. From these they poured their fire of shells as the Sussex Regiment, supported by the City Imperial Volunteers, advanced across the plain. "When the Sussex Regiment had approached within 500 yards, they fixed bayonets and, with a cheer, charged the hill in a grand rush, driving the Boers pell-mell before them. They took a few prisoners, and poured in a hot fire among the runaways."

The resistance in the centre was more stubborn. Half an hour before the 7th Division had crossed Junction Drift, Ross and Henry's mounted infantry battalions had seized the drift near the railway bridge, and were followed across the river by the 3rd Cavalry Brigade and the 11th Division. As the men entered the wide plain the enemy opened on them with guns posted on the hills on the right. A battery of horse artillery replied vigorously and checked their fire, while the 4th and 5th Mounted Infantry pushed forward on the west of the railway. A long ravine separated them from the enemy, who had five guns posted in the open on the farther side; skirmishers occupied the farmhouses and lay concealed in deep spruits. The Boers worked their guns quickly; but their shots flew beyond the mounted infantry, who, having dismounted, bore steadily onwards. Among them were Lumsden's Horse, consisting of young Englishmen who, deserting the counting-houses of Calcutta and the tea plantations of Assam, had answered with enthusiasm the call to defend the Empire. The skirmishers moved forward, followed by the horse batteries, who, as opportunity offered, returned the Boer fire. When the leading line had come more closely within range, a 1-pounder Maxim galloped to the front and discharged showers of missiles into the enemy's guns. Quickly harnessing their teams and limbering up, the enemy dragged their guns away. The mounted infantry pursued them. Five hundred Boers, con-

cealed in mealie-patches, suddenly opened a smiting fire, and they had to fall back on their supports. The Boers, turning round, followed their pursuers. But the Maxim again came into action, and the enemy fell back. Meanwhile Lumsden's Horse had seized a kopje which threatened the enemy's retreat. The Boer artillerymen tried to turn them out by shells, but in vain. The shells burst right and left, but the gallant band held the kopje till they came in touch with Hutton's brigade.*

At daybreak French crossed the river. His orders were to turn the Boers' flank, if possible, and to reach Ventersberg Station in the evening. After marching three hours, he reached the diamond mines at Draksberg. The enemy were reported to be in position on low hills at Vlak Plaat. He sent the Scots Greys to cover the right and reconnoitre, while he detached his 1st Brigade, under Porter, towards Vredes Verdrag to attack the Boers in front. The Carabineers and Inniskillings, belonging to Porter's brigade, rode forward, and a squadron of the latter occupied a kopje. Soon after, the troopers on the knoll spied a huge grey mass advancing towards them. It moved slowly across the plain, and as it crept forward our men saw three columns in close order, and from the khaki dress believed they were a body of mounted infantry. The belief was confirmed by observing that it delivered no fire. Slowly it crept within range, and then, without dismounting, the Boers sent a murderous volley into the troopers on the kopje. Fourteen were struck down dead and many fell wounded. The survivors rushed back to their horses.

At 11.15 the Canadian mounted infantry and a battery were sent to the right to support the 1st Brigade. Meanwhile French continued to develop his flanking movement, and under cover of it he withdrew the 1st Brigade "and swung them to

* *The Times*, June 29, 1900.

the rear of the 4th, which now retired magnificently under an artillery-fire from long-range guns which the enemy had brought to bear upon them." But the enemy's flank had been fairly turned, and their centre and left having already given way, the right fell back from before French shortly after 2 P.M.* The enemy, completely outmanœuvred, retired towards Kroonstad, and blew up the railway bridges and culverts as they fell back.

That evening Lord Roberts encamped with the 11th Division eight miles north of the river. The following day he marched to Geneva Siding, fourteen miles from Kroonstad and eight miles from Boschrand, where the Boers were holding an entrenched position to cover the town. During the night they, however, evacuated their entrenchments at Boschrand and retreated northwards. On the 12th of May Lord Roberts entered Kroonstad with the 11th Division, without encountering any opposition. "His central column had marched over 130 miles in ten days, and the right flank column, under Ian Hamilton, considerably more; and during half those days they had been actively engaged."

Another halt was now imperative, as Lord Roberts could advance no farther until the single railway track upon which he was dependent for his supplies had been repaired. He had also to provide, as far as his resources would permit, for the safety of his main line of communication by occupying strategical points to the east of the railway at Wynberg, Senekal, Lindley, and Heilbron. The Commander-in-Chief calculated that, as soon as Mafeking had been relieved, a large proportion of the troops under Lord Methuen and Sir Archibald Hunter would be available to co-operate on his left flank, and he hoped that Sir Redvers Buller would be able to assist by an advance westward to Vrede, or north-westward in the

* *The Times*, Weekly Edition, June 29, 1900.

Standerton direction. "But, whether these anticipations could be realised or not, I felt that the enormous advantage to be gained by striking at the enemy's capital before he had time to revive from the defeats he had already sustained would more than counterbalance the risk of having our line of communication interfered with—a risk which had to be taken into consideration." *

On the 17th of May, Lindley, a little south-east of Kroonstad, was occupied by General Ian Hamilton's column, and Lord Methuen, acting according to Lord Roberts's orders, reached Hoopstad, on the south-west. "I had thought of his force taking part in the Transvaal operations, but with regard to the probability of disturbances on the line of railway, I determined to place it in the neighbourhood of Kroonstad, to which place it was accordingly directed to proceed." †

On the 18th of May—the very day that Lord Roberts had promised succour should reach the garrison—Mafeking was relieved after a heroic defence of two hundred days. On the 17th of April the Commander-in-Chief gave orders for the formation of a flying column of mounted troops about 1,100 strong, with mule transport, for the relief of the town. He placed Colonel B. T. Mahon, 8th Hussars, a young Irish officer who had made his reputation as a cavalry leader in Egypt, in command of this force. It consisted of "900 mounted men, including the Imperial Light Horse, four horse artillery guns, with 100 men, 100 picked infantry soldiers to guard the wagons, 52 wagons, with 10 mules each, and nearly 1,200 horses. The column was to take with it rations for sixteen days and forage for twelve days. Medicines and medical comforts for the Mafeking garrison were also to be taken." General

* From Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, Kroonstad, 21st May, 1900, to the Secretary of State for War.

† *Ibid.*, Pretoria, 14th August, 1900.

Hunter was instructed to co-operate with Lord Methuen in distracting the enemy's attention until the flying column had crossed the Vaal and had obtained a good start. The day after (4th May) Lord Roberts began his advance on Kroonstad, Mahon crossed the Vaal at Barkley West and moved rapidly to the north. In five days he had done 120 miles. No Boers were encountered till the column reached Koodoos Rand, where the enemy had arranged to dispute advances all along the main road. Mahon, however, with considerable skill, deflected his line of march to the west.* "The Boers here had an ambush in thick scrub, which was strongly supported from Koodoos Rand (at Koodoos Rand Nek they had several guns in position); they made a determined attack, but we beat them off after forty-five minutes' fighting. All troops behaved excellently." †

At 5 A.M. on the 15th of May Mahon reached the River Molopo ("plenty of running water") at Jan Masibi, and there met Colonel Plumer's column, which had just arrived after a night's march. It consisted of Rhodesians, and had been strengthened by C Battery of four 12-pounder guns of the Canadian Artillery, under Major Enden, and a body of Queenslanders. They had formed a part of General Carrington's small force which had come through Beira, and after a splendid march reached Plumer's column, hastening down from the north to the relief of Mafeking.

Mahon rested that day the men and animals, who had been marching all night. At break of day, having formed his forces into two brigades (the 1st under Lieut.-Colonel Plumer and the 2nd under Lieut.-Colonel Edwardes), he advanced towards

* From Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, Pretoria, 9th July, 1900, to the Secretary of State for War.

† From Colonel B. Mahon to Lieut.-General Sir Archibald Hunter, K.C.B., commanding 10th Division.

Mafeking. The force moved along the north or right bank of the Molopo in two parallel columns at half a mile interval, the convoy in the centre and slightly in the rear. About 12.30 A.M. firing was heard on the left front, and Mahon, pushing forward, found the Boers posted all round him and five guns and two pom-poms in different places.

"The convoy rather impeded my movements, as it was under shell-fire, and the Boers were trying to attack it from both flanks and also from the rear; so I had to strengthen both my flank and rearguards. At the same time I continued my advance on Mafeking, the Boers retiring from our front and keeping up with us on the flanks. Our artillery, especially the Royal Horse Artillery, were making very good practice. At 4.40 P.M. I ordered Colonel Edwardes to bring up his left and turn the Boer right flank. This movement was entirely successful. At 4.40 P.M. I had a message from Colonel Plumer to say his advance was checked on the right by a gun and pom-pom fire from the White Horse (Israel's Farm). I ordered the Royal Horse Artillery to shell the house. They soon silenced the gun, but not the pom-pom. I then sent Captain Carr with the infantry to take the house, which they did, and captured one wagon and a lot of pom-pom ammunition. It was by this time getting dark, or I think they would have got the pom-pom." *

At 5.45 P.M. all firing except stray shots ceased. The Boers retired, and the way to Mafeking was open. At 3.30 A.M. on the 17th of May, Mahon's force entered the little town on the veld whose gallant defence had stirred the feelings of Englishmen in every quarter of the Empire. Next morning there was not a Boer near Mafeking.

On the 22nd of May Lord Roberts, with the 7th and 11th

* From Colonel B. Mahon to Lieut.-General Sir Archibald Hunter, K.C.B., commanding 10th Division.

Divisions, left Kroonstad. The same day Ian Hamilton's column reached and occupied Heilbron, thus converging to the railway and the main column. On the left, French, with the 1st and 4th Cavalry Brigades, and Hutton, with the 1st Brigade of Mounted Infantry, were to the north-east of Rhenoster Kop. The next day Lord Roberts, with the main body, reached Rhenoster River. "No opposition was met with, although the hills north of the river furnished a strong defensive position, and all preparations had been made by the enemy to give us a warm reception. It must be concluded that they felt their line of retreat was threatened from the east by General Hamilton's column at Heilbron, and from the west by the cavalry and mounted infantry under Generals French and Hutton, which had effected a crossing lower down the stream." *

On the 24th of May Lord Roberts marched with the 11th Division to Vredefort Station. The 7th bivouacked on the west of the railway, four miles in rear, and the 3rd Cavalry Brigade four miles east of the station. General Ian Hamilton's column halted also to the east of the railway, but seven miles north of the station. The troops under Generals French and Hutton moved to the north-west, the 1st and 4th Cavalry crossing the Vaal at Parys and Versailles.

At Ventersberg Lord Roberts directed Ian Hamilton to move his column across the railway, from the right flank of the British army to the left. "By this move the enemy were completely deceived. They had expected Hamilton's column to cross the Vaal at Engelbrecht's Drift, east of the railway, and collected there in some force to oppose him." †

On the 26th of May Lord Roberts marched with the 7th and 11th Divisions to Taaibosch Spruit, seven miles short of

* From Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, Army Headquarters, South Africa, Pretoria, 14th August, 1900, to the Secretary of State for War.

† *Ibid.*

Viljoen's Drift, where Colonel Henry's mounted infantry had encamped on the spruit the preceding evening. At dawn Henry pushed forward to the railway station of Viljoen's Drift, three miles from the Vaal. "As the Oxfordshire Mounted Infantry and the advance squadron of Loch's Horse came within range a number of shots were fired into them from the railway building. The horse battery at once came into action, and a couple of shells sent about 200 of the Afrikander horses streaming down towards the river." Colonel Henry pushed on his mounted infantry across the country, broken with the plants and shafts of coal mines, to the drift.

"Just as the first company were up to their ponies' girths in the wash of the Vaal a great pillar of smoke went up from the bridge. The railway bridge had gone. Then followed one of the prettiest skirmishes of the war. The Oxford and Warwick companies of mounted infantry, the Bedfordshire Yeomanry, Lumsden's and Loch's Horse pushed over into the Transvaal in succeeding waves. The enemy were still in the mines. For an hour it might almost have been termed street-fighting. The Boers held outhouses and the compound of the mine manager's house. The mounted infantry dismounted, and, their horses grouped behind mining plant, slag-refuse, and coolie huts, were making the most of the shelter, which is plentiful in coal mines. Groups reinforced groups. Half companies dashed from building to building. Irresistibly the firing-line was fed from the river-bed. Section after section galloped out of the drift, cheering in the enthusiasm of a fresh invasion. Two horse guns dashed up under the whip, wet and splashing out of the Vaal—'Action front!' Then all was over. Lumsden's Horse dismounted and skirmished out into the open. The last Boer fired a parting shot and galloped out of range of the shrapnel. A machine-gun with Compton's Horse exhausted

a belt at the scattering horsemen, and ten minutes later the 4th Mounted Infantry were in Vereeniging." *

The main drift over the Vaal was won. The next morning Lord Roberts entered the Transvaal, with the 7th and 11th Divisions and 3rd Cavalry Brigade, and bivouacked at Vereeniging. The infantry had without a halt marched ninety miles in six days. "The climate had been good, but the nights bitterly cold. The road had been the open veld, which is not the best marching-ground now that the grass is burned and slippery. Each man, with his rifle, rounds, bedding, and canteen, has carried 41 lb.—that is, has supported the load which is carried by the average native porter of the country. When I watched the infantry crossing the Vaal this morning, laughing, shaking each other by the hand at the birth of another invasion, I realised that, all said and done, the British infantry is, as it ever has been, the stay of the Empire." † The next morning, with only one day's supply in hand, Lord Roberts's force moved upon Johannesburg, forty-two miles distant. Headquarters, with the 11th Division, proceeded to Klip River station, the 7th Division to Wetkop, south of the station, the 3rd Cavalry south of the station, the 3rd Cavalry Brigade to the east, and Colonel Henry's corps of mounted infantry to the north.

On the 29th of May Lord Roberts continued his march on Johannesburg. Colonel Henry, with the 8th Brigade of Mounted Infantry and J Battery, R.H.A., left Klip River at daybreak with orders to seize Elandsfontein Junction, where the main railway along which Lord Roberts was advancing meets the railway to Natal. They were supported on the right by the Cavalry Brigade, whose orders were to make a wider turning detour east of Boksburg. The 11th Division, with the 7th Division on its left, moved along the main track. About

* *The Times*, June 29, 1900. † *Ibid.*

7 P.M., as Henry was approaching the Natal Spruit-Heidelberg railway, a train was seen steaming at full speed from the direction of Natal. "The 4th and 8th Corps of Mounted Infantry, accompanied by a demolition party of the 12th Company R.E., galloped their hardest to intercept it, shooting as opportunity offered. Their fire was hotly returned from the windows of the carriages, and, after a long chase, which was checked by the intervention of a barbed wire fence, the train escaped, just as the demolition party seemed to head it off." * A party of Boers, posted on some kopjes north of Natal Spruit, opened a heavy artillery fire on the mounted infantry. Henry then occupied some high ground between Elsburg and the railway, and sent back for his artillery, which had been distanced. Captain the Duke of Norfolk, who had resigned the high office of Cabinet Minister to fight for his country, was acting as galloper. He swiftly conveyed the message, the battery soon arrived, and the enemy's guns were silenced. Henry, taking with him two guns, pushed on towards Boksburg, which he secured without resistance. He then turned westward towards Elandsfontein, and took up his position on a hill overlooking the junction, and ordered up the rest of his battery. The Boers poured a heavy fire upon them from a 6-inch Creusot gun which they had mounted on a truck. J Battery soon came into action, and shelled the line beyond the junction; and the Boers, afraid of the track being destroyed, steamed away with the "Long Tom" to Pretoria, "just as a party of the 8th Mounted Infantry galloped up and severed the line." The main body of the infantry attacked Elandsfontein, and after some sharp fighting the Boers were driven from the mine heaps scattered around, and the important railway depot was captured. Henry pushed on to Germiston, the important junction where the line from Johannesburg and

* "Official History," vol. iii., p. 86.

from Cape Colony and Natal joins the Pretoria line. At Germiston, Henry came up with the cavalry, and north of the station the mounted infantry halted for the night east of the Pretoria railway, while the cavalry bivouacked on the west of it. After a brief skirmish in front of Elandsfontein, the infantry divisions marched to Germiston, and that evening Lord Roberts's main body was encamped round it.*

On the left Lord Roberts's well-planned and totally unexpected operations had been carried out with the same success as the operations of the main body. On the 26th of May, two days after he had crossed the Vaal, French crossed the Rietspruit, pushing back the enemy's scouts. On the same day, Hamilton, who was behind French, crossed the Vaal at Wonderwater. On the 27th of May, when the main body was gathered on the northern side of the Vaal, French, acting according to orders, marched northwards for Rietfontein, on the Klip River. On reaching Vlakfontein he found that the track ran through a defile in a spur of the Gatarand range. A strong force of Boers, with three guns and two Vickers-Maxims, held the ridges on both sides of the road. After some hard fighting, French gained possession of the defile, with its egress towards the Klip, and his men, who had marched and fought thirty miles during the day, bivouacked about Vlakfontein.† Ian Hamilton, whose way had been cleared by French, arrived at Wildebeestefontein, about six miles south of Vlakfontein, after a march of thirty miles. On the morning of the 28th, French moved down on the Klip River, and his march was unmolested, for the enemy had abandoned the ridges during the night. "Yet no sooner were the mounted brigades across the river than a heavy converging fire from ten guns on the Klip River Berg and supporting heights near Florida marked

* "Official History," vol. iii., pp. 86, 87.

† *Ibid.*, p. 73.

the enemy's position and his intention to maintain it." French, according to his wont, reconnoitred with great boldness. After he had ascertained the enemy's dispositions, he withdrew the cavalry across the river to Rietfontein, leaving Hutton, with his mounted troop, in occupation of some kopjes to the north of the river which had been captured. At 9 P.M. French received a message from Ian Hamilton containing Lord Roberts's orders and his own intentions with respect to them. He intended to march on Florida around the right bank of the Klip, by Doorn Kop, where he would fight if necessary. French had already received general instructions from Lord Roberts, who was at Klip River Station, as to his general line of advance. He was to move round by Florida, followed by Hamilton, and make for Driefontein, some ten miles north of Johannesburg. At the same time Roberts would march up the line to Elandsfontein and Germiston, and turn the city from the east.

The first thing to be done in the western turning movement was to drive the enemy away from the Klip River Berg and the Doorn Kop Klipspruit kopjes to the west. At 8 A.M. on May 29th the cavalry left Rietfontein and pushed northwest along the right of the Klip towards Doorn Kop and the enemy's right. On reaching the Potchefstroom Drift, French crossed the left bank, and, after a sharp action in which two squadrons of the 7th Dragoons and one of the 4th Hussars showed their mettle, the enemy's advance posts were driven to the Doorn Kop ridge. The enemy now opened a warm converging fire on the cavalry, "and French, having thus marked the enemy, made good the drift, and secured on the enemy's side of it an excellent base for the operations of the infantry, saw that he could not move until they arrived."* Soon after noon Hamilton rode up in advance of his troops to confer with French and to view the ground. The cavalry leader

* "Official History," vol. iii., p. 77.

proposed that Hamilton's force should unite with his to make a wide turning movement by the right bank of the Klip River and avoid Doorn Kop. Hamilton desired to reach Florida by the shortest route, and so favoured a direct attack, and French agreed to go round Doorn Kop. About 2 P.M. the cavalry leader recrossed the drift and started in a north-westerly direction.

The Boer position on which Ian Hamilton determined to make a frontal attack at once was strong. From Doorn Kop, which lay on the British left flank,* it extended in a curve to Klip Spruit, some five or six miles along rocky ridges, whose crests were crowned by long capstones of rock. In front of them "the grass had been burnt, leaving a width of 1,500 yards of ground bare and black." Some 5,000 yards behind the Boer right rose a height called Vogelstruisfontein, on which was posted a heavy gun. Ian Hamilton determined to attack the left and centre of the Boers' position. The 19th Brigade (Major-General H. L. Smith-Dorrien), consisting of the following battalions: 2nd Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, 1st Gordon Highlanders, Royal Canadians,† and the 74th Battery Royal Field Artillery, would advance against the enemy's left. Behind the brigade were the 81st Battery and two 5-inch guns. The 21st Brigade (Major-General Bruce Hamilton), consisting of the following battalions: 1st Derbyshire, 1st Royal Sussex, 1st Cameron Highlanders, City Imperial Volunteers (C.I.V.), and the 76th Battery Royal Field Artillery, would move against the enemy's right centre. Between the brigades "the Royal Sussex regiment and the 82nd Battery Royal Field Artillery were posted as a column of reserve." ‡

* "Official History," vol. iii., p. 79.

† "The 2nd King's Shropshire Light Infantry remained on rear and baggage guard during the day." "Official History," vol. iii., p. 80.

‡ "Official History," vol. iii., p. 80. "As a column of reserve in the centre, Ian Hamilton had the Sussex, Marshall's Horse, and the 82nd Battery." "*Times* History," vol. iv., p. 144.

Ian Hamilton put his force in motion at 2 P.M. The 21st Brigade advanced first, moving northwards, parallel to the western arm of the Klip. "The City Volunteers led the way, the Derbyshire being echeloned slightly to their left rear and the Cameron Highlanders to the right rear." When they approached two isolated kopjes, which rose from the valley that intervened between the flank of the brigade and Doorn Kop, the Derbyshires were sent to secure the lower of these, so as to present a front to Doorn Kop while the City Imperial Volunteers pushed forward. The first kopje was secured, and when the C.I.V.'s began to pass the second the fire on their flank was so severe that the three leading companies, under Colonel W. H. Mackinnon, were sent against it. After a severe fight they carried it. Bruce Hamilton now received orders to stop all movements towards the west and to push forwards in the direction of the right front and the 19th Brigade. The five companies of the City Imperial Volunteers, regardless of the fire of gun and rifle, halted until the Cameron Highlanders came up on the right and preparations were made for storming the main ridge, the summit of which was still about a mile distant to the right front.*

Shortly after Bruce Hamilton had moved the 21st Brigade northwards Lieutenant-Colonel J. Spens, of the Shropshire Light Infantry, led the 19th Brigade to the front.† The Gordon Highlanders, on the left, and the Canadians, on the right, moved forward in first line; the Duke of Cornwall's in second line. As they advanced up the gentle slope which led to the summit of the kopje they were met by a murderous fire of musketry. There was no cover—not even an ant-hill

* "Official History," vol. iii., p. 81.

† "Whilst Ian Hamilton kept the whole of these troops under his immediate control, the dispositions of the infantry attack were entrusted to Smith-Dorrien, who temporarily handed over his brigade to Colonel J. Spens, of the Shropshire Light Infantry." "Official History," vol. iii., p. 80.

broke the surface of the ground. Many fell. But on they proceeded at a steady walk. The zone of burnt grass was reached, and the Boer marksmen behind the rocks on the summit laid many low. On they went. The Boer guns had now been silenced by our artillery. But a heavy volley blazed on the leading line of the Gordons as they advanced within two hundred yards of the crest, and the ground was strewn with killed and wounded. The thinned line halted, and the place of the fallen was taken by the companies in the rear. Then the musketry of the enemy was returned for the first time. A smiting fire was poured into the rocks above. The Boers wavered, the Highlanders charged with the bayonet and hurled back the enemy. Soon after the Canadians, clambering up on the right, appeared on the summit of the crest. The Boers, however, again took up a position on a crest some two hundred yards in the rear. The Highlanders, exposed to a severe fire from the enemy's guns and mowed down by volleys at close range, halted until they had gathered together their ranks and charged once more. In vain the Boers attempted to check them by a volley. The crest was taken and the enemy driven down the steep descent.

Meanwhile, the City Imperial Volunteers and the Cameronians had by rushes made their way forward. Ian Hamilton, to fill up the gap between the two brigades, had sent his reserve, the Royal Sussex Regiment and Marshall's Horse, up to the right of the Cameronians, and they so nearly bridged it that two companies of the Sussex were diverted to join the attack on the eastern kopje. They charged its western face "under a fire so hot that the mules and more than half of the crew of the Maxim gun which had accompanied them were laid low before a round could be fired. As twilight fell the 21st Brigade were on the ridge." *

* "Official History," vol. iii., p. 84.

While these attacks were in progress French was carrying out his important turning movement. Sweeping round Doorn Kop, he made his way rapidly towards Vlakfontein, on the flank of the lofty hill Vogelstruisfontein, where the Boers had placed their reserves and heavy gun.* Seeing their retreat threatened, they fell back northwards, followed by French, who took many prisoners. Growing darkness put an end to the pursuit, and French bivouacked on Vlakfontein, while the two brigades spent the night on the positions they had captured.

Lord Roberts's brilliantly conducted expedition had reached its first great goal, and was to be crowned with a substantial reward. The great commercial and industrial capital of the Transvaal was in the grasp of the British commander, and early on the morning of the 30th of May he summoned Johannesburg to surrender. On receipt of the summons Dr. Krause, the Commandant, drove out to meet Lord Roberts. When they met he offered the unconditional surrender of the town, but he suggested one day's grace in order that he might be able to get the numerous bands of armed burghers to leave the town. If they remained there would be in all probability a good deal of street fighting when the British troops entered the town. Lord Roberts, not unacquainted with the horrors of street fighting, knew that it would involve considerable loss to the British troops, considerable damage to the town, and considerable danger to the women and children. He therefore agreed not to attack the town or enter it until 10 A.M. the next morning. It was a wise and humane decision. But the fighting in the country around the city continued during the day. On the right French and Hutton obtained, about 9 A.M., possession of Roodepoort and Florida, blowing up the line near the former place. Ian Hamilton, having buried his dead, marched up to Florida. The cavalry made their way through the rough

* "Official History," vol. iii., p. 84.

and rocky Witwatersrand, and French spent the night at Klipfontein. Hutton bivouacked near Driefontein, with a commandant and forty-five other prisoners, a captured gun, and twelve wagons of stores and ammunition.

On the left hard fighting took place during the day. A large force of Boers, with three guns and a Vickers-Maxim, attacked the cavalry outposts. "To such close quarters did they come in that R Battery R.H.A. had to shoot from under cover with the shortest fuses, the gun detachments even being withdrawn for a short time, whilst the enemy's automatic gun played accurately on the pieces. The 16th Lancers were hotly engaged and with loss, and it was not until the 9th and 17th Lancers came up to reinforce that the enemy were driven off." * The brigade pursued, but was soon stopped by an order to gain touch, if possible, with French. "In a short time heliographic communication was established between the cavalry wings, and the brigade, having reached a point south of the dynamite factory, halted for the night." During the day the 8th Division was sent to support the mounted outposts, and took up a position two miles north-east of Johannesburg. Army Headquarters and the 11th Division remained about Germiston.

At 10 A.M. on May 31 Henry's mounted infantry entered Johannesburg and occupied the fort. At noon Lord Roberts entered the town with the 7th and 11th Divisions, the Union Jack being hoisted with the usual salute in the main square. After the ceremony the two divisions marched through the town. "They made a wonderful spectacle, these battle-stained soldiers, in the streets of a modern city, with ladies on the balconies throwing down tobacco and sweets to them. Far into the night the great army filed through in the stern panoply of war, looking weird and fantastic in the electrically lighted streets." † Lord Roberts took up his quarters in a small inn,

* "Official History," vol. iii., p. 91. † *The Times*, June 2, 1900.

with the sign "Orange River," three miles north of Johannesburg, on the Pretoria road.

The occupation of Johannesburg marked an important stage in Lord Roberts's great move from Bloemfontein. By his strategy he had completely destroyed the plans of the enemy. Botha intended with a strong force to defend Johannesburg against French's and Hamilton's columns; but Roberts, by throwing with extraordinary quickness his main force upon the enemy's line of communication with the East Rand and Pretoria, compelled the Boer commander to retire, to save the political capital of the Transvaal. It was a well-conceived plan of combined action, carried out with marvellous precision and determination by the British commander and his generals. The design required rapid movements, and success was only possible with such soldiers as Lord Roberts commanded. His infantry marched 130 miles in seven days, and his own alert, buoyant spirit enlivened the endurance and courage of the men. He now determined to husband their strength by giving them two days' rest.

During the halt, news reached Lord Roberts which caused anxiety and suspense. The enemy were closing in behind him, and threatening the single line of railway leading to Cape Colony, upon which he was dependent for provisioning his army. "This information was the more disconcerting, as, owing to our rapid advance and the extensive damage done to the railway, we had practically been living from hand to mouth, and at times had not even one day's rations to the good." * It was suggested to Lord Roberts that it might be prudent to halt at Johannesburg until the Orange River Colony should be thoroughly subdued and the railway from Natal opened. "But while fully recognising the danger attending

* From Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, Army Headquarters, South Africa, Pretoria, 14th August, 1900, to the Secretary of State for War.

a further advance, I considered the advantages of following up without delay the successes we had achieved, and not giving the enemy time to recover from their several defeats or to remove the British prisoners." And on the 3rd of June Lord Roberts went forward with a boldness marking a great commander; but he never lost sight of the danger he was incurring by exposing his communication to the attack of an active and mobile enemy. "The Headquarters (Pole-Carew's) Division and Maxwell's brigade of the 7th Division halted, after a march of twelve miles, at Leeuwkop, Colonel Henry with his corps of Mounted Infantry moving to a point four miles to the north, Brigadier-General Gordon with the 3rd Cavalry Brigade six miles to the east, Lieutenant-General Ian Hamilton with his column to Diepstooi, fifteen miles south of Pretoria, and the troops under Generals French and Hutton to Rooikrans, thirteen miles south-west of Pretoria." *

On the 4th of June Lord Roberts marched with Henry's mounted infantry, four companies Imperial Yeomanry, Pole-Carew's division, Maxwell's brigade, and the naval and siege guns to Six-Mile Spruit, both banks of which were occupied by the enemy.

"The Boers were quickly dislodged from the south bank by the mounted infantry and Imperial Yeomanry, and pursued for nearly a mile, when our troops came under artillery fire. The heavy guns were at once pushed to the front, supported by Stephenson's brigade of the 11th Division, and the enemy's fire was soon silenced. They then moved to the south along a series of ridges parallel to our main line of advance, with the object of turning our left flank; but in this they were checked by the mounted infantry and Imperial Yeomanry, supported by Maxwell's brigade. As, however,

* From Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, Army Headquarters, South Africa, Pretoria, 14th August, 1900, to the Secretary of State for War.

the Boers continued to press on our left flank, and thus threatened our rear, I ordered Ian Hamilton, who was moving three miles to our left, to incline to his right and close the gap between the two columns. As soon as Ian Hamilton's troops came up, and De Lisle's mounted infantry pushed well round the enemy's right flank, they fell back on Pretoria." *

Darkness prevented a pursuit in force, and after nearly twelve hours' marching and fighting the troops bivouacked on the ground gained during the day. "The Guards Brigade lay near the most southern of the forts defending Pretoria, and within four miles of the town; Stephenson's next to the Guards on the west, and Ian Hamilton's column still farther to the west; French, with the 1st and 4th Cavalry Brigades and Hutton's mounted infantry, towards the north of the town; Broadwood's cavalry between French and Ian Hamilton, and Gordon's cavalry to the east near the Irene railway station." The goal of Lord Roberts's great enterprise had been reached.

Shortly before dusk De Lisle, whose mounted infantry, chiefly consisting of Australians, had followed up the enemy to within two thousand yards of Pretoria, sent an officer under a flag of truce to demand, in the name of the British commander, the surrender of the town. No answer was given. About 10 P.M., however, the military secretary to Commandant-General Botha, accompanied by a general of the Boer Army, brought a letter to the Commander-in-Chief from the Commandant-General, in which he proposed an armistice for the purpose of arranging the terms of capitulation. The object of this letter was to gain time to remove the rolling stock of the railway and the English prisoners. "I replied," writes Lord Roberts, "that the surrender must be unconditional, and requested an answer before five o'clock the following morning,

* From Field-Marshal Lord Roberts to the Secretary of State for War, 14th August, 1900.

as my troops had been ordered to advance at daybreak." * At five o'clock on the 5th of June Lord Roberts received an answer to this letter from Commandant-General Botha, stating "that he was not prepared further to defend the place, and that he entrusted the women, children and property to my protection." Lord Roberts ordered Pole-Carew's division, with Henry's mounted infantry, to move within a mile of the town. The leading companies of the Coldstream Guards were pushed forward in extended order to occupy the hills which overlook the town, while the advance guard of the main body made their way through the country in which the brickfields lay. General Pole-Carew and his staff followed the road which looks directly upon the railway station.

"As the advance guard appeared over this nek, a train was seen to be moving in the station yard. Although the burgomaster had surrendered the town on the previous evening, it was still necessary to advance with caution, as it was understood that Botha had agreed to the surrender of the capital with great reluctance. Thus, when a movement was seen in the station buildings, a halt was made to allow the flankers to take possession of the hills immediately below the forts. This short delay lost us a train and two locomotives, for, as the staff galloped down towards the station, a long empty train moved out. The escort did all they could to stop it. Lieutenant Walker galloped for the signal-box. Just as he dismounted a man fired at him point-blank from the cover of some bricks. He climbed up into the box, and pulled down all the levers, and a section of the guard which arrived at the double were just in time to stop a second train as it left the platform." †

* From Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, Army Headquarters, South Africa, Pretoria, 14th August, 1900, to the Secretary of State for War.

† *The Times*, Weekly Edition, July 13, 1900.

Johannesburg and Pretoria

At 9 A.M. Lord Roberts arrived at the railway station, and at 2 P.M. the Commander-in-Chief, escorted by his staff, rode into the wide square in the centre of the town. The drums and fifes of the Guards struck up the National Anthem, and the Union Jack was hoisted on the Raad-zaal, or Government building. The Transvaal was once more part and parcel of the wide dominion over which the flag floats, and under which there is equal law and justice for all men. Lord Roberts rode forward and called for three cheers for the Queen. Loudly rose the warriors' shout for the gracious Sovereign who honoured her soldiers, and whom they loved. For a moment there was silence, then the feelings of the men for their commander found expression, and cheers for Lord Roberts burst forth from the ranks. His skill and courage had won their confidence, and his unselfishness their affection. Their capture of the capital of the Transvaal was the crowning result of his brilliant strategy and their devotion for him.

CHAPTER XIV

CLOSE OF LORD ROBERTS'S OPERATIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA

THOUGH the capital of the Transvaal had been captured, much hard work remained to be done by the army in South Africa. After leaving Pretoria, Botha, with about 12,000 men, occupied a strong position along a range of hills near Pienaar's Poort, a gap through which the railway runs. It is only fifteen miles from Pretoria, and Lord Roberts determined to drive the enemy farther away. On the 11th of June he led from the capital a force of between 16,000 and 17,000 men and seventy guns. "Pole-Carew's Division, with the naval and siege guns, moved to Christinen Hall, opposite the Poort, with Ian Hamilton's column on the right and Broadwood's and Gordon's Cavalry Brigades still farther to the right, in touch with each other and with Hamilton's column. Henry's corps of Mounted Infantry was directed to close the gap in the hills at Frankpoort, to the north of Eerstefabriken railway station; while French, with Porter's and Dickson's Cavalry Brigades and Hutton's Mounted Infantry, was to work round to the north-east of the enemy's position." * The centre of the Boers' alignment was so strong naturally that to have assailed it by direct attack would have involved a useless loss of life. Roberts therefore determined to try again a heavy flanking movement. But the long distances to be traversed, and the defensive advantages which the nature of the ground afforded the Boers, impeded his advance. Moreover, Botha knew from

* From Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, Pretoria, 14th August, 1900, to the Secretary of State for War.

former experience that his flanks were his vulnerable points. His centre was slightly held, whilst the wings of his army were so strong that French and Hutton on the left and Broadwood and Gordon on the right were just able to hold their own.

"Broadwood was, indeed, at one time hardly pressed, being under a heavy artillery fire from his front and left, whilst he was simultaneously attacked on his right rear by a commando from Heidelberg. The enemy came on with great boldness, and, being intimately acquainted with the ground, were able to advance unseen so close to Q Battery Royal Horse Artillery that it was with some difficulty they were kept off, while at the same time another body made a separate attack on Broadwood's right flank. To help the guns and drive off this second body, Broadwood ordered the 12th Lancers and the Household Cavalry to charge. Both charges were successful, inasmuch as they relieved the immediate pressure on the guns and Broadwood's right flank, and caused the enemy to revert to artillery and long-range rifle-fire; but I regret to say that these results were obtained at the cost of some twenty casualties, amongst them being Lieutenant-Colonel the gallant Earl of Airlie, who fell at the head of his regiment, the 12th Lancers." *

Meanwhile Ian Hamilton's infantry pressed on as fast as it could to the assistance of the cavalry, and as each battalion caught up it deployed for attack and became hotly engaged. Lord Roberts saw that the key of the enemy's position on their flank was a high conical hill known as Diamond Hill, and from the movement of the enemy he came to the conclusion there was a chance of capturing a long low ridge in front of it. He determined, therefore, to postpone the attack

* From Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, Pretoria, 14th August, 1900, to the Secretary of State for War.

on Diamond Hill till the next day, when the possession of the ridge would give facilities for a further advance. Before night the hills in front were occupied, and the troops along our twenty-five miles of battle front bivouacked on the ground they held. Next morning (the 12th of June) Hamilton, having told off Gordon's cavalry brigade with one infantry battalion to guard his rear, and Broadwood's brigade with a party of mounted infantry to contain the enemy on his right, attacked Diamond Hill with the 82nd Field Battery, the 1st Battalions of the Sussex and Derbyshire Regiments, and the City Imperial Volunteers' Battalion. "The troops," writes Lord Roberts, "advanced under artillery fire from both flanks, as well as heavy infantry fire from the hill itself. The steadiness with which the long line moved forward, neither faltering nor hurrying, although dust from bullets and smoke from bursting shells hung thick about them, satisfied me that nothing could withstand their assaults." * At 2 P.M. Diamond Hill was taken. The Boers quickly occupied another position, and fighting continued till dusk. During the night the enemy withdrew towards Middelburg, and next morning Ian Hamilton took up the pursuit, his infantry moving to Elands River Station, while his mounted troops pushed on towards Bronkhorst Spruit Station. The enemy having been dispersed, the troops returned the next day to the neighbourhood of Pretoria, "the mounted troops requiring a large number of remounts to restore their efficacy."

When Lord Roberts determined to make a rapid advance on Pretoria, in order to deal a crushing blow on the Government and main army of the Transvaal, he was aware that he would have to make the attempt at the expense of his communications behind him. "I knew," he writes, "I was not sufficiently

* From Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, Pretoria, 14th August, 1900, to the Secretary of State for War.

strong in numbers to make the railway line absolutely secure, and at the same time have a force at my disposal powerful enough to cope with the main army of the Transvaal, supported by forts and guns of position." At Johannesburg, as we have noted, he heard that the enemy had dealt heavy blows on the communications. News also reached him of those errors of execution which, as William Napier states, all generals expect: and the experienced are most resigned, as knowing them inevitable. On May 23, owing to an error of execution, a force of 500 yeomanry was reduced at Lindley. On hearing that the yeomanry had been attacked Lord Roberts immediately ordered Lord Methuen to proceed with all speed to their assistance. Methuen was then one march on the Heilbron side of Kroonstad, and half an hour after the receipt of Lord Roberts's telegram, on the 1st of June, he started off. By 10 A.M. the following day he had marched forty-four miles in twenty-four hours, but was too late to rescue the yeomanry. He then attacked the Boers, between two and three thousand strong, and after a running fight of five hours completely routed the enemy.* On the 6th of June a disaster occurred to a post of Derbyshire Militia at Roodeval. The railway was broken in several places, and valuable convoys were captured. When Pretoria was in our possession and the prisoners released, immediate steps were taken by the Commander-in-Chief to strengthen the posts along the railway. The liberated prisoners were armed and equipped, and dispatched to stations south of the Vaal. As soon as more troops could be spared, they were distributed along the lines between Pretoria and Kroonstad. Lord Methuen was deputed to superintend these arrangements, and on the 11th of June he attacked and defeated the commando under Christian de Wet at the Rhenoster

* From Field-Marshal Lord Roberts to the Secretary of State for War, 5th June, 1900.

River. In a few days railway and telegraphic communications were restored between Kroonstad and Pretoria.

Lord Roberts's first objective was now to provide for the security of the railway south of the Vaal, and to capture or disperse the enemy's forces to the east of that line. His second objective was to push eastward from Pretoria towards Komati Poort, defeating and dispersing the troops under Botha. But at the same time that portion of the Transvaal which lies west of Johannesburg had to be kept under control, and the railway line from Johannesburg through Krugersdorp to Potchefstroom had to be guarded. As the Boers were north of the Delagoa Railway, it would have been taking an undue risk for the British commander to have marched eastwards against Botha until he had sufficient troops, not only for the forward movement, but to guard the communication with Pretoria. To obtain these troops, he had to wait until the railway from Natal to Johannesburg had been restored and the military arrangements made for its protection, and the operations in the north-east of the Orange River Colony were sufficiently successful to admit of the transfer of some of the troops to the Transvaal. Considering the vast area of the country, the long distances our troops had to march, and the mobility of the enemy, untoward incidents and delays were inevitable.

After the defeat of the Boers at Diamond Hill, Lord Roberts sent Ian Hamilton with a strong column to move through Heidelberg on to Frankfort, and thence co-operate with Rundle, Clements, and Paget, with a view to driving the enemy eastwards towards Bethlehem and surrounding them. On the 19th of June, Ian Hamilton's column left Pretoria, and a few days later it occupied Heidelberg, "the most English town I have yet seen." The Union Jack was hoisted in the market square "amidst the cheers of the populace, and British, Australian and other Colonial troops. 'God save the Queen'

was sung, the crowd heartily joining, and English ladies shedding tears of joy. The poor loyalists have had a rough time of it lately." The enemy, who had vacated the town, were pursued by the cavalry. During the pursuit Ian Hamilton broke his collar-bone, and was obliged to return to Pretoria; Sir Archibald Hunter, who in India and Egypt had made a reputation as a most capable general in the field, was appointed to command the column. On the 11th of July, Hunter reached Bethlehem, and found it had been occupied, after two days' fighting, by the force under Clements and Paget.

On the 2nd of July the two generals, having joined hands, had begun their advance on Bethlehem. Paget found the Boers in a strong position on his line of march. Four guns of the 38th R.F.A. and two guns of the City Volunteers were rapidly brought into play. The Boers, creeping up a donga, sent a volley into the battery, and made a rush for the guns. Lieutenant Belcher was killed, and Captain Fitzgerald, the only other officer, was wounded. Twenty men fell, and the horses were struck down. Captain Budworth, adjutant of the City Volunteers, seeing what had taken place, charged with a troop of Australians, and drove the enemy from the guns. At this juncture the infantry, which had been carrying out a turning movement, came into action, and the Boer position was taken. The troops bivouacked fifteen miles north-east of Bethlehem. The next morning Paget moved to the north-west with the object of turning the enemy's left, while Clements's troops operated on their right flank. The day's fighting was mainly an artillery duel, and sundry attempts to outflank the enemy were frustrated on both flanks. "The enemy were found on every space and hill for from six to eight miles on both right and left of the town, while the hills behind were also strongly occupied; and, in addition, on a lofty ridge in front

of the town two guns were discernible. This latter position—a very strong one—was evidently the key of the situation, and its occupants were enabled to annoy and harass the infantry advancing on both sides." * The day wore away without any substantial result, and the infantry slept on the ground they had occupied. Next morning Clements gave instructions to the colonel of the Royal Irish to storm the lofty ridge if he should think the opportunity favourable. Extending his men to three widespread lines (H company in front), their gallant commander led them on. "Without hesitation or a stop for a moment the brave fellows responded. Received with a shower of fire, to which they barely paused to reply, on they went down a long slight depression in the ridge and up the swelling slope, here and there men dropping, but never stopping their comrades." †

The Boers, on seeing the Irish pressing forward, began at once to remove their two guns. But the reverse slope was a steep, rocky descent. With ropes one gun was safely hauled down the cliff. But the second overturned, and the wheel being broken, the retreating Boers abandoned it. When the gallant Irish reached the edge of the cliff, they saw the enemy 200 yards off streaming away. They fired two volleys after them, and then loud rose the cheers when they found the gun fifty feet below. It was one of the 15-pounders of Stormberg.

The enemy, estimated at about 7,000 strong, with twenty guns, retired through the mountains to the south of Bethlehem into the Broad Water Basin, surrounded by a huge semicircular range of hills, and occupied positions of great natural strength commanding the neks or passes. Hunter's instructions were "to block the enemy into the enclosed district into which he had retired, to prevent his escape, bring

* *The Times*, Weekly Edition, 17th August, 1900. † *Ibid.*

him into action, and, if possible, force him to surrender." * To block the enemy and prevent his escape Hunter sent Bruce Hamilton to Naauwpoort Nek and Golden Gate, at the northern extremity of the basin, and watched Retiefs Nek himself. Paget was at Slabbert's Nek, and Rundle was holding Commando Nek. The Boers seemed fairly surrounded, and their escape impossible. But escape is always possible to a small, compact body of men who are expert in the use of horses and transport, who have the sympathy of the inhabitants, and who are familiar with every bridle-path in the country, which is a network of mountains and precipices. On the night of the 5th of September Christian de Wet, with 1,500 picked Boers, each man having a horse to carry his gear, with five guns and ammunition carried on light carts, well horsed, slipped through Slabbert's Nek. It was a mortifying incident, but about 6,000 Boers remained, and around them Hunter proceeded to draw his cordon closer. On the 20th and 21st Bruce Hamilton attacked the enemy holding Spitzkop, a hill nine miles south-east of Bethlehem, and occupied it. On the 23rd of July the heights commanding Retiefs Nek were seized by the Black Watch and Highland Light Infantry. The same day Clements, having joined Paget, gained a footing on the high ground to the right of the Nek by a turning movement executed by the 1st Battalion Royal Irish Regiment, the 2nd Battalion Wiltshire Regiment, and Brabant's Horse. At daybreak on the 24th of July Hunter pressed the success he had gained the previous night, and before sunset he had pushed through the pass to the valley beyond. Clements having occupied Slabbert's Nek, his mounted troops and artillery pursued the retreating enemy.

* From Lieut.-General Sir A. Hunter, K.C.B., D.S.O., commanding operations in the eastern districts of the Orange River Colony, to the Chief of the Staff, South Africa, Fouriesburg, 4th August, 1900.

Hunter ordered Rundle to move towards Fouriesburg, to which the Boers had retired, and on the 25th, with Clements's and Paget's troops, he himself advanced towards the town. The next day, on entering it, he found it already occupied by a portion of Rundle's division, headed by Driscoll's Scouts, who had made a march of twenty-five miles from Commando Nek. The Boers made a dash for Naauwpoort Nek and Golden Gate, but MacDonald had blocked these two entrances. On the morning of the 28th Hunter followed up the enemy beyond Fouriesburg with the available troops of the 8th Division and Clements's and Paget's brigades. Paget commanded the rearguard, which was soon engaged with the Boers, who fought a tenacious rearguard action throughout the day in the vicinity of Staapkranz Ridge, which was only occupied by the Scots Guards, under Major Romilly, D.S.O., after midnight. On the 29th General Prinsloo asked for a four days' armistice. Hunter refused, demanding unconditional surrender, and backed up his demand by a further advance towards the enemy. At 4.30 P.M. the Boer commandant-generals agreed to surrender the next day. "On the 30th of July Prinsloo and Crowther, with the Ficksburg and Ladybrand commandos, 879 strong, surrendered, other commandos coming in later. General Olivier, with his commando, managed, however, to escape during the night through Golden Gate, though he and his men had been included by Commandant-General Prinsloo in the unconditional surrender of the Boer force. The total number of prisoners taken was 4,140, with three guns, two of which belonged to U Battery Royal Horse Artillery. Over 4,000 horses and ponies, a large number of rifles, and over a million rounds of small-arm ammunition also fell into our hands." *

Thus was brought to a brilliant close a series of operations

* From Field-Marshal Lord Roberts to the Secretary of State for War, 10th August, 1900.

"conducted by Lieut.-General Hunter," to use the words of the Commander-in-Chief, "with marked ability and judgment," and carried out by, to use the words of their general, "as fine a fighting force as ever stood to arms." "In spite of hardships, there was no crime, no grumbling. Officers and men are stout-hearted, cheerful, and full of fight." On the 4th of August MacDonald occupied Harrismith, and railway communication was opened between Harrismith and Natal. Lord Roberts's first objective had been accomplished.

The time had come to carry out his second objective—to push eastward from Pretoria towards Komati Poort. But before the British commander could move along the Delagoa Railway he had to clear the country to the north and east of Pretoria, where the Boers, knowing that his force was crippled until his remounts arrived, had been increasing in strength and boldness. On the 18th of July, horses having reached him, and communication with Durban having been established, Lord Roberts dispatched a strong column under Ian Hamilton to Hammanskraal, twenty-five miles north of Pretoria on the Pietersburg Railway. The headquarters of the 11th Division were at Eerstefabriken, east of Pretoria, and the Guards Brigade was farther east, at Rhenosterfontein. French's force was thirty miles south-east of the capital. Ian Hamilton, acting under orders, marched on Bronkhorst Spruit, and, being joined by Mahon on the way, the two columns reached Rustfontein, seven miles north of Bronkhorst Spruit. The enemy, finding their line of retreat threatened, abandoned the strong positions which they were holding in front of the 11th Division, and on the 23rd of July Stephenson's brigade advanced unopposed to Elands River Station, the right flank being protected by the mounted infantry and cavalry under Hutton and French. The same day French, pushing on, crossed to the east of the Wilge River. On the 24th of July Lord Roberts reached Bronkhorst

Spruit, which in the course of the day had been occupied by the 11th Division and Ian Hamilton's column. French and Hutton pressed forward and came in touch with the enemy six miles south of Balmoral. Colonel Alderson attacked their right, while the 1st and 4th Cavalry Brigade made a wide turning movement round their left." * The Boers fell back towards Middelburg. On the 25th of July Balmoral was occupied by Ian Hamilton's troops, and the 11th Division reached the Wilge River. French and Hutton, again pushing forward, crossed Olifant's River at Naauwpoort and bivouacked on high ground, whence the enemy could be seen retreating in great disorder through Middelburg. "The next day French and Hutton entered Middelburg, and a line of outposts was established so as to cut off communications between Botha's forces and the Boer commandos by the west and south of Pretoria." † So far the advance eastward along the Delagoa Bay Railway had been rapidly and successfully executed. But a long halt now became necessary. Time was required to establish the line of communication between Pretoria and Middelburg by repairing the railway bridges, which had all been destroyed. Supplies had to be collected at Middelburg. More troops than were available were needed before the British commander could operate towards the rocky stronghold of Machadodorp, which the Boers held in considerable force. On the 26th of July Lord Roberts returned to Pretoria.

The chief Boer commando to the south of Pretoria was that of Christian de Wet. After breaking away from Hunter he had taken up his position in some extremely difficult country round Reitzburg, seven miles south of the Vaal. On the 4th of August Lord Kitchener left Pretoria in order to assume

* From Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, Pretoria, 10th October, 1900, to the Secretary of State for War.

† *Ibid.*

command of the troops which were surrounding De Wet's lurking-place. Again his escape from a strong force well distributed seemed impossible; but the hills on each side of the river furnished an effective screen to the movements of a mobile column. On the night of the 6th of August, De Wet, by a rapid dash, succeeded in crossing the Vaal by the drift which bears his name. Instant orders were sent to Methuen, who was at Potchefstroom, to block the drifts on the northern side; but he reached the river too late to prevent the dashing Boer commander from getting across. A stern chase ensued. On the 9th Methuen engaged his rearguard, but the Boers, holding every kopje, kept off their pursuers. All night the Boers trekked onwards, replacing some of their exhausted horses by fresh ones from the farms which they passed. On the 10th De Wet had crossed the railway line and left his pursuers to the south of him. On the 12th Methuen, with 1,200 mounted men of the Colonial Division and Yeomanry and ten guns, again came in touch with and engaged the Boer rearguard, and captured a gun. Thirty-five miles across the veld the two contending forces went that day. Before them lay the Magaliesberg range, and there were only three passes by which De Wet and Steyn, who was with him, could escape. Baden-Powell, with his mounted troops and the 1st Battalion Border Regiment, held Commando Nek. Lord Methuen, leaving De Wet's direct track, took up a position six miles south of the Magato Pass. On the 15th Ian Hamilton, instead of blocking Olifant's Nek, according to his orders, proceeded fifteen miles south-west of it, in the hope of having an engagement. De Wet took advantage of Hamilton's false step, moved unobserved to the north of Hamilton's column, and crossed Olifant's Nek. Thus he and Steyn, who was the moving spirit of the war, escaped, and the war was kept going. De Wet, however, could no longer threaten Lord Roberts's communica-

tions; and the troops engaged in his pursuit were available for further advance along the Delagoa Railway to Komati Poort.

On the 24th of August Lord Roberts made his third and final advance. Pole-Carew, with the 11th Division, moved along the railway line and occupied Belfast, after having encountered some opposition. Sir Redvers Buller, who had been moving up from the Natal Railway with the gallant force which had crossed the Tugela, relieved Ladysmith, and forced Laing's Nek, was fifteen miles due south of that town. French was operating on his left flank. On the 25th of August Lord Roberts arrived at Belfast. On reconnoitring the ground he saw that he was in touch with a part of the Boer main position. "This position, as far as could be ascertained, extended from the neighbourhood of Swartz Kopje on the north to Dalmanutha on the south, a distance of some twenty miles." * The Commander-in-Chief's first idea was to hold the enemy in front with the 11th Division, whilst Buller and French turned their left from the south; but, on consulting with General Buller, he found that the ground was not favourable to a turning movement from the left, and he therefore determined to contain the enemy's front by the 18th Brigade, and turn his right flank with the Guards Brigade, assisted by General French and Colonel Henry's mounted infantry. In pursuance of this plan, the following day French moved from six miles south of Belfast to six miles north of it. "Pole-Carew, with the 11th Division, endeavoured to advance along the Lydenburg road to his support, but came under so heavy a shell and rifle fire that he had made but little progress. Buller, on the right, had been more successful. He had pushed back the Boers—who were holding a series of strong positions to the

* From Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, Pretoria, 10th October, 1900, to the Secretary of State for War.

south-east of Belfast—to within four miles of the railway between that town and Dalmanutha." *

On the 27th of August French advanced eight miles farther north, and drove the enemy from the Swartz Kopje, and from this position threatened their lines of retreat. The same morning Buller, working on the Boer left flank, advanced towards the high Bergendal Ridge, which runs from Belfast on the south side of the railway. At almost the highest point of the ridge is situated Bergendal farm. "About 300 yards to the west of the farm a peculiar kopje, formed of a conglomeration of immense stones, covering about three acres in extent, rises suddenly from the smooth grassy slopes which prevail over the rest of the ridge. The formation is an unusual one, as, except at the kopje itself, which, with its immense stones and rocky crevices, forms a sort of natural fortress, the ground for 2,000 yards round affords no shelter of any sort for advancing troops. The slopes within 500 yards of the kopje being gentle and easy, we could see that the kopje was occupied in some force: we were unable to locate two guns posted on the ridge to the east of it, and it was evident that several trenches had been dug, and that the ridge itself was held in considerable force." †

At 11 A.M. Buller's artillery began to shell the farm and rocky kopje. The enemy replied with a pom-pom at short range, a "Long Tom," and several high-velocity guns. "The bombardment," writes Sir Redvers Buller, "was much assisted by a 4.7 gun posted at Belfast, which the Commander-in-Chief, who was watching the operations, at once directed to co-operate with us." After three hours' shelling, as the

* From Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, Pretoria, 10th October, 1900, to the Secretary of State for War.

† From the General commanding the Natal Army to the Field-Marshal Commanding-in-Chief the Forces in South Africa, Machadodorp, Headquarters Natal Army, Spitzkop, Transvaal, 13th September, 1900.

enemy still clung to the kopje, the infantry were ordered to assault it.

"General Kitchener directed Lieut.-Colonel Metcalfe to move the 1st Battalion Rifle Brigade under cover of the ridge from which our guns were firing, and place his battalion across the main east and west ridge on which the kopje of the farm stands, and to assault in front from the west; Lieut.-Colonel Payne to move the Inniskilling Fusiliers down the face of gun ridge, and to assault the flank of the position from the south; the 1st Battalion Devon Regiment supporting the left centre, and the 2nd Gordon Highlanders supporting the right attack. At the moment of starting to descend gun ridge, the leading companies of the Inniskilling Fusiliers were met by a very accurate and heavy pom-pom fire which staggered them for a moment, but the men re-formed themselves, and pressed onward with hardly any delay. Both regiments were admirably led by their commanding officers. The enemy stood their ground with great gallantry, and only left their positions when the Rifles were among them and the Inniskilling Fusiliers on their flank, between twenty and thirty of them keeping up fire until actually made prisoners. The attack, which, as I have described, was made without the assistance of any cover, was a most gallant one. The moment the kopje was carried, the Rifle Brigade, although they had lost their colonel, who, to our great regret, was wounded while gallantly leading the advance,* at once re-formed and swept on on their own initiative up the plateau, carrying all before them, supported by the Devons, who had got up on the left, and the Gordons and Inniskillings, who joined it on the right.

"The honours of the assault belong to the Rifle Brigade,

* Buller writes on the 27th of August, "I much regret to have to report that Colonel Metcalfe, who led his regiment most gallantly, and whose dispositions were excellent, was severely wounded."

as they had to attack the part of the kopje which had been most protected from our artillery fire; but all the troops did splendidly, and the carrying of such a position, held as it was by resolute men, will always remain present to the minds of those who witnessed it as a most gallant feat of arms." *

Next day Buller occupied Machadodorp almost without opposition. On the 30th of August, French's cavalry, supported by the Guards Brigade, reached the neighbourhood of Nooitgedacht, and 1,800 of our prisoners, whom the Boers had removed from Pretoria, reached our camp. On the 1st of September, Lord Roberts, acting under the orders of Her Majesty's Government, issued a proclamation annexing the Transvaal. The same day Buller began his movement towards Lydenburg, fifty miles north of the railway line, by moving from Helvetia to Elandspruit on the Crocodile River. Next morning his advance was opposed by the enemy, who held a strong position at Badfontein. They had with them three 6-inch guns. "Buller described the position as resembling Laing's Nek, and I agreed with him that it would be wiser to defer his attack until I could send him assistance." † Accordingly, on the 3rd of September, Lord Roberts sent Ian Hamilton to turn the right flank of the Boer forces in front of Buller. Two days later he occupied Zwagershoek, "thus securing the debouchment through the defile into the Lydenburg Valley, so threatening the right rear of the Boer position at Badfontein." The same day Buller demonstrated strongly against the enemy's left flank, the 1st Battalion Leicestershire Regiment and the 1st Battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps dragging the guns of a field battery up a steep hill, when a heavy fire was brought

* From the General Commanding the Natal Army to the Field-Marshal Commanding-in-Chief the Forces in South Africa, Spitzkop, Transvaal, 13th September, 1900.

† From Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, Pretoria, 10th October, 1900, to the Secretary of State for War.

to bear on the Boers. On the 6th of September the enemy, owing to the right flank of their position having been turned, and to the pressure on their left flank, evacuated their stronghold at Badfontein, and fell back through Lydenburg. Some went to Kruger's Post, but the majority, with two 6-inch guns, took up another formidable position at Paardeplaats, in the mountains overlooking the town, and seven miles to the east of it. The Boers always said they would make their last stand at Lydenburg. Ian Hamilton's force occupied the town, and on the 8th of September Buller attacked the enemy at Paardeplaats.

"The Boers held a precipitous ridge 1,800 feet above the valley, horse-shoe in shape and only easily approachable by paths which were completely commanded from the crest. One great feature of the attack was the skill with which the guns were pushed forward from point to point, until they reached positions from which they silenced the enemy's artillery and greatly subdued the rifle fire. Another was the dash with which the infantry pressed forward over rocks and across ravines, and other apparently impracticable ground, until they carried the ridge. A third was the simultaneous arrival of the right, left, and centre of the attack—namely, the Royal Scots, the Royal Irish, and the 1st Battalion Devonshire Regiment—in the enemy's position. The Boers lost considerably, but their retreat was concealed by heavy mist. Our casualties amounted to thirteen killed and twenty-five wounded, three of the former and sixteen of the latter belonging to the Volunteer Company of the Gordon Highlanders, which came under shrapnel fire at a distance of nearly seven miles from the enemy's guns." *

The next day Buller followed the beaten Boers, and on the

* From Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, Pretoria, 10th October, 1900, to the Secretary of State for War.

11th of September he had occupied the junction of the roads from the east and south near Spitzkop. That evening Paul Kruger, seeing overwhelming forces gathering around him, fled from the Transvaal. He had staked all, and all was lost. His courage, his doggedness, his power of sarcasm, his energetic vigour of language, made him a strong ruler over ignorant men. He showed no small amount of world-craft, but he was lacking in the foresight of a statesman. Had he played the game more wisely, had he spoken England fair, had he been faithful to his conventions and not sought alliances with foreign Powers, had he removed abuses and reformed his corrupt Government, he might have preserved the independence of his country. Paul Kruger thought that England would not fight, and if she did fight, would not win. He was fatally mistaken.

On the 13th of September, French, who had been operating on the right of the railway, entered Barberton. By taking his cavalry across the mountains he completely surprised the enemy, and succeeded in releasing the remaining British prisoners. Meanwhile steady progress had been made along the railway, and on the 19th Henry's mounted infantry and the Guards Brigade occupied Kaapmuiden, the junction where the Barberton line joins that to Lorenzo Marques. On the 24th of September, Pole-Carew with the Guards Brigade and Henry's mounted infantry entered Komati Poort, 260 miles from Pretoria, and the Boers were driven beyond the utmost limit of their western frontier.

Advancing from the Modder River, Lord Roberts had pushed before him by manœuvres the Boer army across a continent where war would not support war, and by his combinations and marches had compelled his adversaries to abandon their rocky strongholds and to desert without a serious struggle the capitals of the two republics. With the occupa-

tion of Komati Poort and the dispersal of Commandant-General Louis Botha's army, the organised resistance of the Orange Free State and the Transvaal may be said to have ceased. The Boer troops were scattered, yet to beat an army in detail the generals must be acquainted with the country and well informed of their adversary's movements. The English generals had to fight in an unknown land, and their maps were worse than useless; "they are a positive danger and delusion." * The tangled character of the country made the handling of troops difficult—disconcerting plans, and rendering engagements indecisive, since the beaten foe could always retire to some defile or ridge where cavalry could not pursue him. "The local knowledge and power of getting over the country; their being masters of three languages in use here, to our one; their sources of news from all men and women; their not wearing uniform, and so posing one moment as a peaceful farm dweller, and the next proving an active enemy; their secret supplies of arms, ammunition and food; their hardihood and physical training; their expert and universal skill with horses and transport, with every resource of the country in their favour and denied to us—these are some of the advantages to the Boers in this warfare." † Such advantages are not to be overcome in a moment, and the complete subjugation of two countries, mainly consisting of veld, jungle, and mountains, whose united areas amount to 161,966 miles, was necessarily bound to be a long and wearisome task. But it was an imperial work, and had to be done.

Lord Roberts, having brought his great operations in South Africa to a successful close, was summoned to England to undertake another momentous and arduous task: the creation of an effective army for the United Kingdom. On the 18th of

* From Lieut.-General Sir A. Hunter, K.C.B., D.S.O., 4th August, 1900.

† *Ibid.*

October it was announced that "Her Majesty the Queen had been pleased to approve the appointment of Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, V.C., to be Commander-in-Chief." The announcement was hailed with the deepest satisfaction, not only by soldiers, but also by the whole population of the Empire. The war had brought home to the mind of the nation the fact that England requires a real army—an army in adequate numbers, with its appointment in sound condition, ready to take the field at home or abroad when England demands its services. It was felt that the soldier who had devoted his whole life to his profession, and knew thoroughly in all its parts and requirements the business of war, was best fitted for the creation of such an army. But being satisfied on that point, England must give him authority to carry out what is necessary without having to suit the financial ideal of a Chancellor of the Exchequer, or the varying currents of party interests.

On the 29th of November Field-Marshal Lord Roberts handed over the command in South Africa to Lord Kitchener, Chief of the Staff. The farewell address which he issued to the troops has the simple modesty, the generous glow, and the eloquent enthusiasm of the born leader who sees a hero in every private soldier:

"Being about to give up the command of the army in South Africa into the hands of Lord Kitchener, I feel that I cannot part with my comrades, with whom I have been associated for nearly a year, often under very trying circumstances, without giving expression to my profound appreciation of the noble work which they have performed for their Queen and country, and for me personally, and to my pride in the results which they have achieved by their pluck, endurance, discipline, and devotion to duty.

"I greatly regret the ties which bind us are so soon to

be severed, for I should like to remain with the army until it is completely broken up; but I have come to the conclusion that, as Lord Kitchener has consented to take over the command, my presence is no longer required in South Africa, and that duty calls me in another direction.

"I shall never forget the officers and men of this force, be they of the Royal Navy, the Colonials, the Regulars, the Militia, the Yeomanry, or the Volunteers. Their interests will always be very dear to me, and I shall continue to work for the Army as long as I can work at all.

"The service which the South African Force has performed is, I venture to think, unique in the annals of war, inasmuch as it has been absolutely almost incessant for a whole year, in some cases for more than a year. There have been no rests, no days off to recruit, no going into winter quarters, as in other campaigns which have extended over a long period. For months together, in fierce heat, in biting cold, in pouring rain, you, my comrades, have marched and fought without halt, and bivouacked without shelter from the elements. You frequently have had to continue marching with your clothes in rags and your boots without soles, time being of such consequence that it was impossible for you to remain long enough in one place to refit. When not engaged in actual battle, you have been continually shot at from behind kopjes by invisible enemies, to whom every inch of the country was familiar, and who, from the peculiar nature of the country, were able to inflict severe punishment while perfectly safe themselves. You have forced your way through dense jungles, over precipitous mountains, through and over which with infinite manual labour you have had to drag heavy guns and ox-wagons. You have covered, with almost incredible speed, enormous distances, and that often on very short supplies of food. You have endured the sufferings inevitable

in war to sick and wounded men far from the base, without a murmur, and even with cheerfulness.

"You have, in fact, acted up to the highest standard of patriotism, and by your conspicuous kindness and humanity to your enemies, your forbearance and good behaviour in the towns occupied, you have caused the Army of Great Britain to be as highly respected as it must be henceforth feared in South Africa.

"Is it any wonder that I am intensely proud of the Army I have commanded, or that I regard you, my gallant and devoted comrades, with affection as well as admiration, and that I feel deeply the parting from you? Many of you, Colonials as well as British, I hope to meet again, but those I may never see more will live in my memory, and will be held in high regard to my life's end.

"I have learned much during the war, and the experience I have gained will greatly help me in the work that lies before me, which is, I conceive, to make the Army of the United Kingdom as perfect as it is possible for an army to be. This I shall strive to do with my best might.

"And now, farewell! May God bless every member of the South African Army, and that you may be spared to return to your homes, and find those dear to you well and happy, is the earnest hope of your Commander!

"ROBERTS."

CHAPTER XV

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE BRITISH ARMY

On the 2nd of January, 1901, Lord Roberts, in accordance with the express commands of the Queen, who, with sad heart but unfailing courage, had followed the vicissitudes of the war, landed at Cowes and proceeded to Osborne. Her Majesty, at an audience, conferred upon the general who had so often led her soldiers to victory an earldom, with a special remainder to his daughters and their heirs in succession. The gallant lad who ought to have succeeded him had gone before him. Her Majesty also bestowed on the successful general the Garter, the badge of the highest order of English knighthood. Forty-two years before the Queen had bestowed on him with her own hands the greatest distinction which a British soldier can win—the bronze Cross of Valour.

On landing at Cowes, Lord Roberts received an address of welcome from the people of the Isle of Wight, and his reply contained some memorable words: "The soldiers of Great Britain," he said, "and the soldiers of Greater Britain, have pulled together as brothers, fighting under one common flag and owning allegiance to one common Sovereign, beloved and revered equally by all. These unanimous outbursts of loyalty must, I think, be extremely gratifying to Her Majesty, and must be considered extremely satisfactory by all Her Majesty's loyal subjects. For with our Empire firmly knit together, we need fear no outward foe so long as we are careful ourselves to see that there is no weak point in our armour."

"See that there is no weak point in your armour," has been Lord Roberts's message to the British nation.

At Southampton Lord Roberts found a tumultuous welcome, and the freedom of the city was bestowed on him. The vehemence with which he ever desired to give due credit to all who served under him was evinced in his reply to an address of welcome. "Lord Kitchener," he said, "has been my right hand throughout the campaign, and I am deeply indebted to him for his wise counsels and his ever-ready help. No one could have laboured more strenuously or in a more self-effacing manner than Lord Kitchener has done. He has helped me most loyally, and without the slightest idea of self-aggrandisement. There is another debt of gratitude which I owe, and which I sometimes doubt I shall ever be able fully to repay, and that is to the grand men I had the privilege to command, and to whose courage, devotion and gratitude I feel that I owe the distinction which you have to-day conferred upon me. The skill of the commanders, the intelligence of the staff, the self-sacrificing heroism of the regimental officers, the bravery of the rank and file, the uncomplaining fortitude of both officers and men, and the courtesy and chivalry displayed by all ranks to the women of the country in which our fighting has been carried on, is a source of pride and gratification to me, and will never be forgotten by me."

Immediately after replying to the address, Lord Roberts left Southampton by special train for London, and at all the stations through which the train dashed there were large crowds who acclaimed him with every evidence of popular enthusiasm. When he stepped on to the platform at Paddington the band struck up "See the conquering hero comes," and the brisk, alert figure advanced to receive the greeting of the Prince and Princess of Wales, who had come to do honour to a faithful servant of his Queen and country. In a Royal carriage, ac-

companied by an escort of the 10th Hussars and six splendid soldiers of the Indian Army, he was slowly driven along the streets gay with flags and banners, lined with troops, and crowded by a multitude delighted that their hero had returned. As the pomp passed on its way to Buckingham Palace, mingled with the huzzas of the people were heard the words, "Bobs! Bravo Bobs!" The people of England had learnt from the British soldier to regard the name with affection, and it was not the Conqueror, but "Bobs" the English people welcomed home that day.

The last campaign had ended, and the veteran, after his hard work, had established a just claim to rest. But he was now called upon to undertake a duty as difficult and complex as was ever imposed upon a soldier. The stern lessons conveyed by the war had taught England that it was a vital necessity for her to be provided with an army not only equipped for any sudden emergency, but numerically able to supply the inevitable wastage of a campaign. But the nation did not realise what Lord Roberts always realised, that we cannot get a bigger and a completely better army without the co-operation of the nation. The majority of people had a vague idea that Lord Roberts could, like some magician, by a wave of his field-marshal's baton, produce an effective army. It took Moltke, supported by a despotic sovereign, twenty years to reorganise the Prussian military system. But under our Constitution it is not the expert general, but changing civilian Secretaries of State for War, occupied with party politics and with maintaining their party in power, who are entrusted with the reorganisation of our military system. Two months after Lord Roberts returned to England and assumed the office of Commander-in-Chief, Mr. Brodrick (Viscount Midleton), Secretary of State for War, laid his scheme of army reorganisation before the House of Commons.

It contained some great and valuable reforms, but it was devised in the main not to grapple with, but to evade, an almost impossible task. The Cabinet, a body of party politicians, demanded that the Minister for War should frame a scheme which should furnish a Regular Army sufficiently strong for expeditionary purposes, for India and the foreign garrisons, and for home defences—associated with the Militia and Volunteers—without looking beyond voluntary enlistment for the means of augmenting and recruiting our troops. A statesman of commanding authority might then have taken advantage of the strong feeling aroused by the checks and disasters at an early stage of the South African War to persuade the nation to adopt a substantial and permanent system of national defence based on the solid foundation, not of conscription, but compulsory universal military training. One word from a strong man was wanted. The question is often asked: Why did not Lord Roberts then give the word? The answer is simple. He was Commander-in-Chief of the Army. For a soldier in active employ to have expressed an opinion in public with regard to the scheme of compulsory training would have been contrary to the King's Regulations. It was for the Cabinet to frame a military scheme, and for the Commander-in-Chief to see that it was carried into execution.

Lord Roberts laboured with characteristic energy to render efficient the system constructed by the Cabinet for the great business of war. The basis of the system was voluntary enlistment, and therefore it was necessary to hold out every inducement and every encouragement to attract the best men. The Government must compete with the labour market for recruits, and it must pay the market rate. But besides paying the market rate, everything must be done to improve the status of the soldier and his standard of living. No Commander-in-Chief of the Indian forces was more zealous, as we

have shown, in striving to the utmost to increase the welfare of the British soldier than Lord Roberts, and during the time he held the command of the British Army a great deal was done to make the life of the soldier at home more comfortable. In England, as in India, he tackled that difficult question—the management of the canteens. Steps were taken to make them more attractive to men who wanted to spend a quiet hour over their tea and coffee. No detail, however small, which tended to conduce to the welfare of the British soldier, escaped the attention of the Commander-in-Chief. The far sight and courage with which he conducted his campaigns gained for Lord Roberts the esteem and admiration of the nation and army. The unselfish attention in camp and cantonment to the welfare of the British soldier has gained for him an absolute sway over their hearts and wills.

If a nation is to have an efficient army, it must secure not only the very best soldiers, but also the very best officers that can be produced. And as in the case of the soldier, so it is with the officer: if a nation wishes to have the best material it must pay for it. Lord Roberts belonged to an army in which the emoluments allowed the certainty of a professional career for an officer. He was desirous that a commission in the British Army should be a provision for a gentleman to follow the military career for life, and that he should have every opportunity of winning a reward corresponding to his talents and his zeal. It would have been useless at that time for the Commander-in-Chief to have proposed an increase of pay for officers, because, owing to the heavy financial burden entailed by the war, both parties in the House of Commons were determined that army expenditure should be reduced. Lord Roberts, however, did his utmost to curtail an officer's necessary expenses, and so conduce to make his life more economic without affecting his

social status or the regimental life which has done so much for the British Army.

Lord Roberts took advantage of his South African experience for purposes of improvement in the professional education of the British officer. Many very hard and unjust things have been said about the gentlemen who hold His Majesty's Commission. The South African War did not reveal that they were, as a rule, "incapable" and "ignorant" of their duties. It afforded a fresh illustration of their magnificent pluck, determination and endurance. But the Boer War did disclose that the officer's teaching had been to some extent on wrong lines, and that he must have a different training to adapt himself to a completely new order of military circumstances. The Commander-in-Chief and the Secretary of State for War decided that the reform must begin in the cradle of his military life. A committee was appointed to investigate thoroughly the course of instruction at Woolwich and Sandhurst, and, acting on the report, many reforms were made in the administration and discipline of these institutions. The chief aim of a military academy is to train a cadet how to think and act as a soldier. In his regiment he will learn the practical details of his profession, and how to manage men. Our South African experiences brought home the fact that a change must be made in our infantry and artillery drills, and this important matter engaged the attention of a commander-in-chief who for some years before the South African War had declared that radical alterations should be made in order to adapt our infantry and artillery drills to the improvements in the weapons of war. The artillery and infantry drills were revised by officers who had experience in South Africa, and an epitome of each book was issued. A manual for the instruction of mounted infantry and yeomanry was also prepared and issued.

Lord Roberts laboured sedulously to improve the military training, not only of the Army, but its auxiliary branches. He found the condition of the militia, the representative of the old Constitutional force of the country, unsatisfactory as regards its organisation and training, and he did his utmost to convert it into a real support to the Army. Measures were also taken to make the other national force, the yeomanry, which possesses a name dear to Englishmen, more effective and popular. Lord Roberts considered that the volunteers must not be treated as mere rifle corps, to promote the love and practice of rifle-shooting, but should be made thoroughly efficient for home defence. He strove that they should have trained officers and non-commissioned officers, better range accommodation and guns, and he insisted that a biennial training under canvas was absolutely necessary, for no amount of drill can compensate for practical work in the field. A committee was appointed to consider the subject, and to make such suggestions regarding the proposed training as would meet the civil requirements of the men.

To create an efficient army a nation must have not only a sufficient number of officers and soldiers, thoroughly trained in the science of modern warfare, but they must also be provided with the best weapons and the artillery with the best guns. The Boer War showed that the carbine used by our cavalry was not good enough, and before Lord Roberts returned to England—indeed, before the war—he urged the desirability of the British Army having a rifle that would do for the mounted troops as well as for the infantry. Lord Roberts, before he came home from South Africa, also pointed out that our field artillery must be improved, and that the horse artillery gun had scarcely longer range than the service rifle. Designs were called for, and improved types of guns for horse and field artillery were decided upon. Some years before the

Boer War Lord Roberts, as I have already recorded, said, "I trust that in the British Army, at any rate, we shall hear no more of the moral effect of guns, but of their destructive power, and that generals in command will readily put up with the inconvenience which long lines of guns involve, and wagons on the march undoubtedly cause, for the sake of having a superior force of well-served artillery, the possession of which would in all probability lead to victory." The advantages and disadvantages of having heavy guns in the field was discussed by Wellington with characteristic thoroughness and foresight. But in the South African campaign we made a grievous mistake in neglecting to do what we had done in India for more than a century—and what the Boers did—take heavy guns into the field. It is due to Lord Roberts that heavy guns now form part of the equipment of our Field Army.

The Boer War brought home to us the necessity of making our army more movable. "No organised transport corps existed," wrote Lord Roberts, "when I arrived in South Africa." In 1882 Lord Roberts, in a paper on "The Present State of the Army," had pointed out the necessity of having a practical transport corps, "to meet the varied requirements of the several countries in which our troops may be employed." He wrote:

"In the Crimea, and still later in South Africa, it is notorious that, so far from having any preconceived plan for transport work and a trained staff to carry it out smoothly, everything was left to the last moment and to chance, in the hope that officers and men, chosen at random from the several branches of the army, would at once be able to improvise a system, and to manage with success hundreds of bat-animals or ox-wagons. Apparently we have not profited much by our experience, for we hear that difficulties of transport are again being encountered in Egypt owing to proper arrangements not having been made in time."

Eighteen years drove on. We were again at war in South Africa, and lives were lost and treasure wasted "owing to proper arrangements not having been made in time." Lord Roberts determined that this should not happen again. As Commander-in-Chief in India he did much to mould the Indian transport system, and special attention was paid by him to forming a fixed system at home.

The preceding is a brief review of the measures taken by Lord Roberts to improve the efficiency of the army, whose reorganisation was the work of the Cabinet—a body in whose proceedings the most expert soldiers of the day had no voice. They were not measures likely to attract public attention. Matters of technical detail for the improvement of so complicated a machine as our army do not lend themselves to theatrical treatment. "But," as Lord Roberts wrote some years ago, "it is by attending to details that the army of one nation becomes superior to that of another, and is enabled to win victories with a minimum expenditure of blood and money."

While he, after three years of toil, was labouring manfully for the improvement and welfare of the army, the country was suddenly surprised towards the middle of September, 1903, by news that Mr. Chamberlain (Colonial Secretary), Mr. Ritchie (Chancellor of the Exchequer), and Lord George Hamilton (Secretary for India) had ceased to be in the Cabinet. In the reconstruction of the Ministry Mr. Brodrick was transferred to the India Office, and Mr. Arnold-Forster, Secretary to the Admiralty, became Secretary of State for War. He was a man of an able and noble mind, who had for many years studied military questions at home and abroad, and was acquainted with the mechanism, not only of the British Army, but of the armies of the principal Continental nations. But with all his great qualities, Arnold-Forster had certain defects which prevented him from making the best use of the power he had

attained. He had unbounded confidence in himself, and having formed an opinion he was seldom open to argument. He had studied military systems, and he was therefore apt to form an opinion on technical subjects without recourse to professional sources of information. He had the misfortune to become Secretary of State for War when the weakness of the Cabinet was apparent. The military policy of his predecessor had not proved the success that was expected. The nation had discovered the barren results of the war, and had grown more and more dissatisfied with what it had cost. The Opposition criticised with some injustice and considerable bad taste the military policy of the Government, and there was a strong demand for reduction of military expenditure. The publication of the Report of the Royal Commission on the War, which showed that the Government and the Military Department were quite unprepared for a campaign, was read with amazement and indignation, and increased the distrust of the military administration. The important point that many of the evils pointed out by the Commission were due to the Cabinet not heeding the warning and advice of experts was overlooked. A month after Arnold-Forster became Secretary of State for War, the Government appointed "a Committee consisting of Lord Esher, Admiral Sir J. Fisher and Colonel Sir G. S. Clarke, the Governor of Victoria, to advise as to the creation of a board for the administrative business of the War Office, and as to the consequential changes thereby involved." On a committee appointed to revolutionise, not only the War Office, but the Army itself, there was no one, as Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman said, having any acquaintance with the administration of the Army. On the 1st of February the first Report of the War Office Re-organisation Committee was published. Among other suggestions, it was proposed that there should be an Army Council modelled on the Board of Admiralty,

but unfortunately the Admiralty precedent was not kept in view. If it had been, the Secretary of State for War would have been First Lord of the Military Board, and the Commander-in-Chief, as Senior Officer of the Army, First Military Lord. An Army Council was created which gave the Secretary of State for War, not colleagues, but a body of advisers personally dependent on the Minister, who have acted, not as a check, but as a screen. The Esher Committee also suggested that the office of Commander-in-Chief, so necessary to the discipline of every army, should be abolished. On the 18th of February, 1904, the following Special Army Order was issued. It was the first order published by the Army Council, and it expressed the thanks of the King to Lord Roberts on his retirement.

ARMY ORDER

SPECIAL

WAR OFFICE, 18TH FEBRUARY, 1904

The following is promulgated to the Army by direction of the Army Council:

Retirement of Field-Marshal Earl Roberts, K.G., V.C. His Majesty the King has been graciously pleased to direct the issue of the following Order to the Army:

"BUCKINGHAM PALACE,

"*18th February,* 1904.

"I desire on behalf of my Army to express my deep regret at taking leave of Field-Marshal Earl Roberts, K.G., V.C., who retires from active employment on relinquishing the high office of Commander-in-Chief, which will not again be filled. For over fifty years the Field-Marshal has served Queen Victoria, my beloved and lamented mother, and myself, in India, in Africa, and at home, with the highest distinction. During

that long period he has performed every duty entrusted to him with unswerving zeal and unfailing success.

"I am unable to part with my Commander-in-Chief, without returning publicly to him my thanks, and those of my Army which he has commanded, for the invaluable services he has rendered to my Empire, and I ask all ranks of my Army to profit by the example of his illustrious career, and of his single-minded devotion to his Sovereign and to his country.

"(Sig.) EDWARD R. ET I.

"By order of the Army Council,

"E. W. D. WARD."

CHAPTER XVI

THE LAST GLORIOUS CAMPAIGN

THUS the active military career of Frederick Roberts ended. He had conducted important campaigns with the utmost ability, he had fought great actions, he had secured a memorable name, and he had won the affection of a nation. Fifty years of active service had not dimmed his eye nor abated his natural force, and he carried into retirement the habits of action. His great ambition to form an efficient army for the support of a mighty Empire and the security of England had penetrated into the deeps of his heart and mind. He followed with incessant interest the fresh attempts made by the Secretary of State for War to settle the question of military reform. Mr. Arnold-Forster acted very characteristically—he at once proclaimed that the army must be fundamentally reorganised. But the Cabinet, which contained two members who had held the office of Secretary of State for War, was not inclined to admit that something was rotten in the state of Denmark. The Minister of War had his proposals closely scrutinised by his colleagues, and this produced differences in the Cabinet, and delay. Arnold-Forster also discovered that he could not rely on the Army Council which he had created for the support of his policy. Some of the military members did not care to share the responsibility for changes which might prove unpopular and had not the unanimous support of the Cabinet. Moreover, it had become apparent that the Ministry had begun to exist on sufferance. The attacks of the Opposition on the wavering military policy of the Government became more vigorous. The Report

Photograph by Emery Walker, Ltd.

LADY ROBERTS

From the Painting by Philip A de Laszlo, M.V.O.

of the Commission on the Auxiliary Forces, presided over by the Duke of Norfolk, attracted considerable attention. It stated: "Your Majesty's Militia and Volunteer forces have not at present either the strength or the military efficiency required to enable them to fulfil the functions for which they exist." The country became indignant at the delay in producing the long-promised army reform scheme. In July, 1904, the Minister for War laid his statement of policy before the House of Commons. He wanted a long service army for the purpose of providing the garrisons of the Empire at home and abroad in time of peace, and a short service army remaining at home in time of peace and furnishing a great reserve for the expansion of the army in time of war. He wanted to have a striking force always ready to go overseas at a moment's notice on the outbreak of war. The Militia was to be the basis of the proposed short service army. It was to be made liable for foreign service. Enlistment to be for two years with the colours and for six to ten years with the reserve. He proposed to take 60,000 Volunteers and make them into an efficient field army, while the other 120,000 were put on easier requirements. Many of the suggestions received the approval of the soldiers, but the proposals regarding the Militia and Volunteers were unpopular, and were vigorously attacked by the Opposition. A weak and self-mistrusting Government proceeded to appoint, in the spring of 1905, a committee which investigated and criticised the Secretary of State's Army Reform Scheme and propounded a plan of Army reform of their own. The proceedings of the committee led to endless gossip, and the influence of the Secretary of State for War lessened in the House. Before he could carry his main proposals the Unionist Parliament ceased to exist. The Ministry perished because the country discovered it lacked virility in domestic administration, as it lacked virility in naval and military administration.

In February, 1906, the new House of Commons assembled, and a month later Mr. Haldane, a lawyer of great ability who had entered the Cabinet as Secretary of State for War, introduced the Army estimates. The speech showed a rich conception and a considerable energy of resource. "The Army," he said, "was never more efficient than it is at the present time. Never better in personnel or in organisation."

No one has more strongly insisted on the supreme importance of maintaining at the very highest standard both the strength and efficiency of our Regular Army than Lord Roberts. "England may be an island," he said, "but the Empire is a Continental power with vast land frontiers in India and in Canada, which have to be defended, and for the defence of which we must in the main look to the regular army. That the regular army should be strong in numbers and efficient in training, that it should be wholly available for its oversea duties, and that it should be capable of great expansion in war, these, to my mind, are primary conditions the necessity for which cannot be too strongly insisted upon."

In order to provide the necessary expansion and support, Mr. Haldane proposed to create a citizen army: "Our scheme deals with a National Army as a whole. It is a linked chain, each link of which is necessary to the chain as a whole. To organise the National Army for war, and not for show or sham, to put it on a business footing by bringing the civilian and the soldier into co-operation for a common purpose—that is our aim and object." The Norfolk Commission had advised the principle of compulsory training. They wrote that "a home defence army, capable in the absence of the whole or the greater portion of the regular forces of protecting this country against invasion, can be raised and maintained only on the principle that it is the duty of every citizen of military age and sound physique to be trained for the national defence, and to

take part in it should emergency arise." The voluntary system was, however, to be the foundation stone of the National Army organisation. The people were to come of their own accord, they were to train themselves and organise themselves. "We may need expansion," said Mr. Haldane—and no more remarkable words were ever uttered by a Minister of War—"but I do not believe that compulsion would be of the slightest avail for the purpose. I believe in the giving of local encouragement by every means in our power to the people, the giving to their associations an interest, not in aggression, not in the spirit of militarism, but in the defence of their homes, of their country, and of the Empire, of which they form a part. Put within their hands the means of that defence, explain to the people what you want of them, and they will come to your side, and you will not have much difficulty in getting the resources you require, freely and generously offered to you. But for that purpose they must have the chance to train themselves and organise themselves. *It is, therefore, to my mind, essential that they should be given the opportunity of organising themselves for possible wars in a fashion that may lead rather to the expansion of quantity than the raising of a high quality in peace time.* I should like to see every man interesting himself in possible contingencies and taking up military training, but not in such a fashion that he would be called upon to interfere with his business, or set aside his engagements. If you leave our people alone, whether they belong to the working classes, the middle classes, or the upper classes, you will find a spirit shown among them which is perfectly ready of its own initiative to undertake in sufficient number the training that is necessary to make the art of war an art which is not unknown to them. *So that if war broke out, you could give them an opportunity of training upon a higher scale, and turning themselves into a reservoir, out of which*

you could feed the Regular Army in time of need, and also strengthen *the defensive power of the Empire as a whole.*" *

The spirit of a nation is no doubt a splendid factor in a National Army, but it requires to be subject to discipline. "Quantity rather than quality" is a dangerous principle, as history shows, on which to found a National Army, and the Franco-German War supplies us with a striking example of grave disaster due to "training upon a higher scale after war broke out." But these principles were embodied in the new scheme of military organisation. The Militia, our old Constitutional force, was abolished by statute, and the remnants of the force turned into a Special Reserve. The Volunteer disappeared, and the Territorial soldier took his place. He can be enlisted at seventeen years of age, and the engagement is for four years. In the first year he must do a minimum of forty drills of an hour each, and a minimum of eight days, or a maximum of fifteen days, in camp. In the next year he must do ten drills of an hour each, and the same camp training. After the units have received this training, the Territorial Army will, "in the event of mobilisation, be ready to be called out for its six months' war training." This was the army which was to be, according to the Minister of War, "the last resource of the nation in a time of great emergency."

Lord Roberts gave his approval to the organisation of the Territorial Force. In the House of Lords he stated that Mr. Haldane deserved gratitude for founding a Territorial Army. He watched with interest the efforts made by the County Associations to make it a success, and he admired the self-sacrifice and patriotism of those who joined it. But a general who has devoted his life to the study of the business of war, and is accustomed to the continuous rigid training of the regulars, might well entertain, along with a keen sympathy, a grave

* "Army Reform," pp. 91, 92, 93.

doubt as to any effective military machine being manufactured by the minimum peace training laid down for the Territorial Force. "It is less," says Lord Roberts, "than the minimum training in any army or militia in the world." As for the extraordinary design to impart the war training after war had broken out, he said, in a speech delivered in the Mansion House, July 22nd, 1912:

"The proposal to give six months' training after war breaks out is so amazing as to be unworthy of consideration, and it is difficult to believe that it was made seriously by its talented author, seeing that readiness for war is the purpose aimed at by every European nation; and nowadays, when war breaks out with the greatest suddenness, and the stake at issue between two great nations going to war would be so gigantic, the temptation to secure the advantage of the initiative and to commence hostilities without declaration of war could hardly be resisted."

In an address to the Kentish Men and Men of Kent, 27th of November, 1912, Lord Roberts again mentioned "the strange condition which is an essential factor in this scheme—a condition unprecedented with any army in the world—namely, that the force is to receive six months' training after war has broken out, before it is even supposed to be capable of dealing with an invading army." Lord Roberts knew from experience that war is a hideous business which cannot be paltered with, and that no nation can be safe which does not give its whole energy to the preparation of war. The business demands a larger measure of time than six months.

"Can any scheme for the defence of any nation be more madly conceived? We have been given an object lesson in the Near East as to the insanity of the idea that our citizen army will be given six months to prepare after war has been declared. On the 8th of October Montenegro declared war,

and in four weeks the Turks were beaten in all directions, and were making their last stand within a few miles of Constantinople."

When the Territorial Army was formed Lord Roberts regarded it as the first step towards Great Britain having a Home Defence Army capable of protecting this country from a possible invasion of the United Kingdom by a highly trained army. It was, as he said, "an augury of great hope." But it was a fond hope. Six years rolled on, and the Territorial Army had neither the strength nor the military efficiency required to enable it to fulfil the function for which it was established. Lord Roberts considered it his duty to probe and expose this source of danger for England. By thus boldly acting, the old veteran knew he had embraced the unpopular side; he had entered upon a bitter and feverish contest which would demand a considerable amount of toil; he would have to encounter bitter opponents, and, at times, meet a hostile auditory. But every consideration of mere prudence was absorbed in the great ruling question, the safety of England: "England that to me has been so much—England that for me has done so much."

Lord Roberts was a man of seventy-nine years all struck when he began his last glorious campaign against the ignorance of the country, against the apathy of the country, and against a long-standing prejudice of the country. Twelve years had passed since the Boer War, and the recollection of the early defeats and misfortunes had begun to lapse from public memory. "The tendency to forget the lessons of past events," said Lord Roberts, "as soon as those events are over, seems to be almost irresistible. Nothing, apparently, but absolute disaster is likely to cure us of the inveterate belief that somehow or other we are exempt from all the laws which have governed the rise and fall of nations, and can always rely

upon some miraculous interposition of Providence to see us through the hour of danger."

But if England is wise she will play the same game no more. Lord Roberts did not forget that in fighting about 70,000 Dutch farmers we had to employ practically the whole of the Regular Army, the whole of the Reserve, the larger part of the Militia, and an important part of the Volunteers. He remembered that young wastrels of the streets were paid five shillings per day to go out to South Africa, and were sent back as worse than useless. If during the Boer campaign we had been suddenly engaged in a war with a great Power, how could we have repelled invasion? How could we have repelled a raid?

It is, however, difficult to persuade the majority of Englishmen that an invasion or a raid is a serious object of alarm. But those of us who have protracted life in any measure near to the period reached by Lord Roberts have seen strange changes: new powers arise, new systems of policy, new armaments. As the late Lord Salisbury, a most sagacious and cautious statesman, said: "Everywhere you see the powers of offence increasing. Armies become larger, navies are founded, railways, telegraphs, all the apparatus which science has placed at the disposal of war, become more perfect and more effective, and these things may, by one of those strange currents which sweep across the ocean of international politics, be united in one great wave and dash on our shore." It is often said that the fleet is our bulwark against any great wave. Our naval power must be, not a barrier, but the right arm of England always ready to strike a deadly blow wherever the enemy can be found. Lord Roberts, in a speech marked with considerable fire, said:

"A permanent navy we must possess, whether of two keels to one or three keels to two. That is a self-evident truth.

But if this Empire is to keep abreast of the rapid and tremendous developments amongst the world Powers around us, something more is necessary, and the necessity increases with every year, almost with every month. It is the necessity for an army strong enough to ensure the mobility of our Navy, and strong enough also to make our strength felt on the mainland of Europe, should we ever appear there as the armed ally of another Power, as we were on the verge of doing last autumn. That also is, or ought to be, self-evident."

England has a vast interest to preserve, and she must have adequate means of preserving it. Lord Roberts told his audience at Manchester, a stronghold of Cobden and Bright, that "if we are to continue as an Imperial Power, or even exist as a nation," we must have some form of compulsory service. This was the lesson he learnt from the South African War and the subsequent attempts to create an army on the voluntary system. But compulsion does not at all necessarily mean conscription of the continental type. Lord Roberts has always maintained that our army for foreign service must be a voluntary army. But what Lord Roberts held is that we need to increase the source of the supply, to call gradually into existence a nation trained to arms, upon which we can rely entirely for home defence, and to which we can appeal confidently for the requisite number of volunteers for foreign service at moments of crisis. He required universal military training—some form of National Service, which "is the only salvation of this nation and this Empire." It was not this or that military system he recommended, but he called upon the working men of Manchester to assert "their rights as Britishers by demanding the greatest, the highest of all civic and of all national rights—the right to be taught to defend your country—the right, that is, to defend your

own honour as Britons and your liberties as citizens of this Empire. Thus, and thus only, shall you be worthy of that Empire's great past, and of the dignity which that past confers upon every man of you, whatever your position in life may be."

Four months after his speech to the citizens of Manchester, Lord Roberts opened a great campaign at Bristol. Thousands flocked from all parts of the western counties to hear him. There were more than twenty thousand applications for admission to the Colston Hall. It was a tribute to a noble military career. The speech was a soldier's speech, brief and direct. Lord Roberts reminded the multitude that he had passed his childhood at Clifton, and at Bristol he had received his early education. He then proceeded to rebut certain arguments and statements of his opponents. As the President, he told them that the first and foremost object of the National Service League "was to ensure the safety of these islands and the maintenance of this Empire." He had no desire to set up an aggressive or jingo spirit in the nation. "Peace, not war, is my aim and earnest desire; defence, not offence, . . . and therefore what I do well to stir up, to foster and develop, is a more manly and patriotic spirit in the nation—a spirit which shall induce our youth to realise that they must be not only ready but prepared to guard the heritage handed down to them." He then combated that common fallacy that universal military training is contrary to the historic principle of Liberalism. It is too often forgotten that our military system, so far as home defence was concerned, always contemplated compulsory service as a last resort. This is the principle embodied in the Militia Act. As to the old objection that universal military training is "an interference with" individual liberty, there is no more interference with liberty in making a citizen serve the State

for a time than is involved in making him pay rates and taxes. There was no greater champion of individual liberty than John Stuart Mill. But he laid down the proposition that everyone who received the protection of society should be bound to observe a certain line of conduct towards the rest. "This conduct consists, first, in not injuring the interests of one another . . . and, secondly, in each person's bearing his share (to be fixed on some equitable principle) of the labours and sacrifices incurred in defending the society or its members from injury or molestation. These conditions society is justified in enforcing, at all costs to those who endeavour to withhold fulfilment."

So far from the scheme of the National Service League being contrary to Liberalism, it is, as Lord Roberts told the workmen of Leeds, democratic. It "proposes to working men a substitute for a system which is full of inequalities, which is unfair, inefficient and inadequate, and which cannot by any stretch of the imagination be said to be based on Liberal principles; to substitute, I say, a system which is truly democratic, a system in which every citizen of these islands, high and low, rich and poor, shall have equal rights and equal responsibilities."

In April Lord Roberts carried his campaign into the north. At Leeds he was given as great a welcome as at Wolverhampton and Bristol. Thousands thronged the streets to see the hero as he drove, amidst tumults of enthusiasm, to the Town Hall, which was packed by a great multitude eager to hear him. Lord Roberts is a friend of the people, but he is too sincere to stoop to flattery. He told the people of Leeds his own convictions, and he appealed to their patriotism. He could have no conception of a citizenship which did not combine political rights with the duties of defence. He then pointed out the difference between the system of National Service which

he advocated and the Continental system. "There are certain local distinctions, but in those countries, generally speaking, every young man at the age of twenty is compelled to spend at least two entire years, month by month, week by week, as a soldier in camp or in barracks. During that period of at least twenty-four months he can return neither to his trade nor profession. What, on the other hand, are the requirements of the National Service League? And how does the Citizen Army differ from the Continental conscript army? First of all, in the matter of time, we require that every young man, on reaching the age of eighteen, should give a short period, not exceeding a few months in the first year and a few weeks in the second and third years, to discipline, drill, and musketry—just enough, in a word, to make him feel within himself the power efficiently and honourably to take his place in the firing-line should this country ever be invaded." After appealing to the patriotism of the mothers of Britain, Lord Roberts explained the duties which the Citizen Army would be expected to perform:

"It would be an army exclusively for home defence; there would be no respect of persons; it would in no circumstances be required to aid in putting down strikes; and men who, like the Quakers, had conscientious scruples against war would not be compelled to take up arms." He proceeded: "And now let me say one word to the young men of this city, to the apprentices in trades of every description. I have no wish to minimise the sacrifice which the surrender of even a few months of your time will entail, but in what greater cause could you make such a sacrifice? And at what period of your lives could such a sacrifice fall more fittingly? Between eighteen and twenty-one you are passing from youth to manhood. It will not be all sacrifice, either; there will be much gain. In the school and exercise ground of the Citizen Army you will break the routine

of your trade and daily avocation, and amid new scenes and an invigorating and fresh environment you will have more leisure, and thus acquire a better insight to face the problems of that critical age. And what is more excellent than that, when all your faculties are still buoyant and elastic, you should have time to reflect upon the responsibilities of coming manhood and coming citizenhood."

In May Lord Roberts entered Scotland, and at Glasgow he addressed multitudes who had come from Edinburgh, from the Lowlands and Highlands, to hear the soldier who had often led their countrymen to victory. He addressed them as he had addressed the working men of Bristol, Leeds, and Wolverhampton —with the same sincerity and interest, the same appeal to the gravity and responsibility of being citizens of a great and renowned state. He laid before them a patriotic policy—a policy for maintaining Britain's great and proud position, for safeguarding her shores by the prestige of the patriotism, bravery and power of her sons. The concluding words were well calculated to strike the audience:

"In attempting to strike that balance, the balance between the hopes and fears which, at such a time as this, assail the human breast, when I reflect upon the progress which this movement has made during the past four months in every grade of society amongst the British public and in the Press, a memory comes over me which turns misgiving into hope and apprehension into confidence. It is the memory of the morning when, accompanied by two of Scotland's most famous regiments, the Seaforths and the Gordons, at the end of a long and arduous march, I saw in the distance the walls and minarets of Kandahar, and knew that the end of a great resolve and a great task was near. Thus to-night, encouraged in no small degree by those crowded meetings at Norwich, at Manchester, at Bristol, at Wolverhampton, and at Leeds, and encouraged

above all by your good will and this immense concourse in front of me in this hall, and trusting to the influence, direct and indirect, which you can bring to bear on the politicians alike of this city and of this nation, I seem to see the gleam in the near distance of the weapons and accoutrements of this army of the future—the Citizen Army, the warder of these islands, and the pledge of the peace and of the continued greatness of this Empire." So closed a great and noble campaign.

CHAPTER XVII

VALE!

THE veteran was soon to be at rest. He worked on with undaunted spirit for the service of England till the day of his death. The story of his life during his last year remains briefly to be told. His love of England was hardly surpassed by his affection for the Army which he had so often led to victory. In the spring of 1914 a cruel slur was cast upon the loyalty and discipline of its officers, and he made, in the House of Lords, a most powerful speech in their defence. He said:

"I can fairly claim to have some knowledge of these things, and I can tell you, My Lords, with all the conviction produced by sixty-two years' service in the Army—and I am sure that those of your lordships who have had the honour of serving His Majesty will bear me out in this—that the soldier does not bother his head about party politics: indeed, he dislikes politics, and his indifference is even tinged with contempt for the unfortunate people engaged in political warfare, as men who are perforce bereft of individuality. That, believe me, My Lords, is the general feeling in the Army; and if you add to that the sense of *esprit de corps* and almost inordinate pride in the Army, is it ever conceivable that soldiers would consent to engage in a political plot, or to assist one party to secure a political advantage over its opponents? The thing is an absurdity. The man is not living who could seduce the Army to play so despicable a part."

Vale!

Lord Roberts lived to see once again the British officers seal their devotion to their King and country, even to the laying down of their lives and wearing "Death's royal purple in the foeman's lines."

During the last year of his life it was my privilege to pay sundry visits to his country home at Ascot. As experience had taught me that it is a difficult and dangerous task for a civilian to describe the operations of war, I sought his assistance with regard to certain technical questions and points on which contemporary writers and historians differed. He generously furnished me with some important facts, and dispelled some erroneous statements. It was most instructive to hear him discuss his strategy in the Boer War and illustrate it on a map. He told me that, shortly after the commencement of the South African Campaign, two Staff Officers called on him and asked his opinion as to the plan of campaign. He traced on a map the route he afterwards followed. I put before him several important and delicate points regarding the Second Afghan War. His replies were always clear and complete, and he supported them by letters and dispatches. No official document seemed to have escaped his tenacious memory. He was always scrupulously fair to his opponents, and full of praise of those who had served under him.

My last visit to Ascot was in July, 1914, when the prospects of peace were daily becoming more shadowy. He considered that England was bound in honour to defend the neutrality of Belgium. He expressed his belief in the efficiency of our Regular Army, and his utmost confidence in British soldiers, but he wished we had more of them. He made no allusion to his noble and indefatigable efforts to create a Citizen Army, "the pledge of peace," nor to his warning to the nation that at any time England might suddenly find herself face to face with the gigantic militarism of Germany. He spoke of the

patient endurance of privation and fatigue and the splendid valour of our Native Indian Army. The last I saw of Lord Roberts was standing on the doorstep as I drove away from Englemere that afternoon. Never was a happier home than his. His devotion to his wife, the partner of all his thoughts, was unbounded. That day he mentioned how she travelled many hundred miles alone, and in a rough conveyance, to meet him on the frontier on his return from one of his campaigns. Never was there a more affectionate parent, never a firmer friend.

On the 4th of August England was at war. Lord Roberts was a hero of Irish blood. He was Colonel of the Irish Guards, and on the 11th of August, when they were on the point of departure for the front, he, in wishing them Godspeed, spoke the following words:

"I am proud of being an Irishman myself, and I am proud of being the Colonel of the Irish Guards. We are fighting for a good cause, fighting to prevent friendly nations from being crushed by a formidable and unscrupulous enemy, fighting for our own country's liberty, and for the preservation of our great Empire. I cannot be with you in person, having passed the years allotted to man, but I shall be at the head of the battalion in spirit; my thoughts will ever be with you, and I shall look out eagerly for reports of you. You are in God's hands. Trust Him, and be of good courage, and He will help and strengthen you. I pray God that I may live to welcome you on your return home, covered with honour and glory. God bless you. Good-bye! and good luck to you all."

He did not live to see them return home, but he lived to see them covered with honour and glory.

Lord Roberts felt keenly that age prevented him from again leading British troops to victory. "If I were only ten years younger!" was his sad exclamation. But he had long

passed that period of life when, according to the Psalmist, it behoves men to lay aside their harness. On the 30th of September he entered his eighty-third year. But his spirit remained undaunted and his energy unflagging. He worked day and night to promote the welfare of the troops in the field. His consuming desire was to be with them. Then when he heard how gallantly the Indian Troops were fighting by the side of their British comrades, he felt it was his duty as their old chief to go and speak to them words of hope and sympathy in their native tongue.

Lord Roberts's interest was not confined to the Indian Empire, where he had served for forty-one years, but it embraced England's world-wide dominion. He had seen the splendid valour shown by the Canadians at Paardeberg, and it was at his own request he was appointed Colonel-in-Chief of the Oversea Forces in England, and he accompanied the King and Queen and Lord Kitchener when they inspected the Canadian Contingent on Salisbury Plain. On the 11th of November he crossed over to Boulogne. He inspected the Indian hospital ship in port. "It was wonderful," writes the wife of the Chief Medical Officer on board, "to see them, directly he was recognised they were all longing to get up and salute him. He was very kind to them all, and heard all about their wounds, patting their heads and saying: 'Poor chap, poor chap!' When he left the ward there was a general murmur from them all, blessing him. I have never seen such an affecting sight. The tears ran down the old man's face." From Boulogne he motored in a bitter cold wind to General Headquarters, and was received by Sir John French, the hero of the famous dash to Kimberley.* On Thursday, the 12th of November, a bleak winter day, he visited the headquarters of the Indian regiments. He was received by two leading Rajput Chiefs, whose ancestors

* See Chap. IX.

had been warriors from time immemorial—the Maharajah of Bikanir and Sir Pertab Singh, and other Indian officers. No soldier ever enjoyed a more splendid and joyous reception than he received from the Sepoys, with whose feelings and interests he had always identified himself. The next day the tour of inspection was continued, and the air rang loud with the cheers of the British soldiers for their beloved hero "Bobs." That evening it was found he had contracted a chill, and congestion of one lung and pleurisy rapidly developed. When Saturday, the 14th of November, opened, it was seen that he was gradually growing weaker, and during the day he became unconscious; at 8 P.M. he ceased to breathe. Outside the big guns were booming.

Four days after his death, the Prime Minister moved, in the House of Commons:

"That this House will, upon Monday next, resolve itself into a Committee to consider an humble Address to His Majesty, praying that His Majesty will give directions that a monument be erected at the public charge to the memory of the late Field-Marshal Earl Roberts, with an inscription expressing the admiration of this House for his illustrious military career, and its gratitude for his devoted services to the State."

In the course of his speech, Mr. Asquith said:

"I will not presume to pass a judgment upon his military qualities and achievements, but I am confident that I am not going a step in advance of the ultimate verdict of history when I say that he takes a high and undisputed place amongst our greatest British captains—as our poet says, 'on Fame's eternal head-roll worthy to be found.' Nor did he, when he retired from the active service of the State, resign himself to an old age of lethargy and ease. His vivid and ardent spirit, his devoted and untiring patriotism were still alert and alive with a fervent energy which age could not dim or daunt.

"I recall the last talk I had with him, only two or three weeks ago, when he pressed upon me his desire to be of use in whatever capacity in this latest and greatest of our wars. To the end he was not only wishing, but working, for the success of our arms. Death came to him at last where, we may well believe, had the choice been his, he would have elected to die. Fresh from reviewing the Indian regiments to whom his name and fame are a watchword and an inheritance, saluted as he passed away with the distant roar of the artillery, which falls, we may well believe, like noble music upon the ears of the dying warrior, and almost within sight of the trenches held by his old comrades in arms with the same dauntless heroism which he himself had so often inspired and led to victory, he could well say, '*Nunc Dimittis.*'"

Lord Kitchener's speech was worthy of the soldier who uttered it, and worthy of the soldier commemorated. After briefly recording Lord Roberts's great military services, he said:

"When the present war broke out, all his thoughts, as I know well, were for the troops in the field, which, but for his age, he would have undoubtedly either directed or commanded. His indomitable spirit led him, in spite of his weight of years, to face the discomforts of a journey to the Army in France, and, although he died on this mission of encouragement to those of whom no small number had served under him before, he would himself, I feel sure, have wished for no happier end than to pass away, the greatest soldier of our day, in the midst of the greatest Army the Empire has ever put into the field, with the sound of the shells and the cheers of his comrades still ringing in his ears. Lord Roberts's reputation as a soldier stands secure, and no words of mine are needed to praise him. He was one of the most tried and proven leaders of men the

British race has ever produced, and the country at the present crisis can ill afford to lose the services of so eminent a military adviser. It has fallen to my lot as Secretary of State for War to attempt to give expression to the sense of affectionate veneration and high esteem with which the Army regarded the late Field-Marshal, for whom, as my old chief, I entertain feelings upon which I cannot expatiate here. I, more than most men, had occasion to learn and admire his qualities of head and heart; his ripe experience and sage counsel were fully and freely offered to me to the end. To us soldiers the record of his life will ever be a cherished possession. We mourn his loss, but hope to profit by his illustrious example."

On the 16th of November, 1914, through the street of the little French town of St. Omer, lined with soldiers resting on their reversed arms, the remains of Frederick Roberts were carried. The coffin was preceded by the pipers of the Highland regiment which had turned for him the tide of battle in the mountains of Afghanistan, and the wail of the most solemn of dirges, "The Flowers of the Forest," stirred the air. British cavalry, French cavalry, and Indian troops led the procession. The pomp halted, the coffin was carried into a small temporary chapel, and there stood beside it British, French, and Belgian officers, and officers of the Indian Contingent, among whom were three of India's noblest and proudest rulers. At the head of the bier stood the heir to England's throne. A few prayers were said, and soldiers facing death every hour sang the noble hymn, "O God our help in ages past." Then across the square the British bugles rang out the "Last Post." Soldiers bore the coffin to the carriage which was to take it to the port. As the ambulance moved away guns of the battery which Lieutenant Roberts joined at Peshawar roared out their last farewell. Across the sea the coffin was carried, and brought to the country home he loved so well.

Vale!

Three days later, on the 19th of November, a great multitude, subdued and sad, lined the streets to watch the military pageant pass as it slowly made its way to St. Paul's Cathedral. It was no splendid spectacle, but a scene of deep and moving sadness. Within the walls of the Empire's great fane the King was present to pay his last respects. With every sign of high honour the coffin was committed to the grave. Near Nelson and Wellington sleeps the great soldier who served England to the end.

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